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Imprimatur,

*Liber cui Titulus,* A Letter in  
Answer to a Book, Entituled,  
*Christianity not Mysterious, &c.*

M<sup>o</sup> 6.  
1697.

*Narcissus Dublin.*

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A  
LETTER

IN

Answer to a BOOK

ENTITLED,

*Christianity not Mystorious.*

As also to

All those who set up for

REASON and EVIDENCE

In Opposition to

REVELATION and MYSTERIES.

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By PETER BROWNE, B. D. Senior  
Fellow of *Trin. Coll. Dublin.*

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The THIRD EDITION.

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L O N D O N,

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IN

ANSWERS TO A BOOK



OF THE

REASON AND EVIDENCE

REASON AND EVIDENCE

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A  
LETTER

In Answer to a

BOOK

Entituled,

Christianity not Mysterious,

S I R,

WHEN I sent to borrow of  
you the Book Entituled,  
*Christianity not Mysterious*,  
I little thought of draw-  
ing on my self any trouble beyond the  
bare reading of it; but since you have  
desir'd my thoughts of the matters con-  
tain'd in it, I was unwilling to refuse.  
Though I must freely tell you, what you  
seem to own in your Letter, that I think  
my self better employ'd. And your say-  
ing, that it is no neglect in a Shepherd  
to leave his feeding of the Lambs, and

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2     *An Answer to a Book Entituled,*

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go aside for a while, to beat off any thing that comes to devour or infect them, would not have prevailed with me, if this had caused any intermission in that business, which I hope will turn to better account, when I come to receive my Wages. But having a little time to spare, I shall perform what you desire.

And I have done this the rather for that you tell me the Book had made some noise ; and that the Author is countenanc'd and encourag'd by some Men of sense. I don't much wonder at it ; for every Man of Sense is not a Man of true Religion : Besides, it is not every Man of Reason and Integrity hath leisure to consider it : and if they have, yet these sort of abstracted Discourses are out of the road of Men of Business.

What you observe is very true, that the generality of Men who write such Books as these, and talk of them most, are those of a mixt sort of Learning, Persons of a miscellaneous Education, who have some insight into most of the Sciences, but are thoroughly vers'd in none. And the talking of Idea's, and running endless Divisions upon them, is a cheap and easie way some Men now-a-days have taken up, of appearing wise and





and learned to the World. Whereas the bottom of it all is no more than this; That Men of nice Heads have agreed to speak of plain things in a peculiar Dialect of their own; which if they were stript of those Terms of Art, and put into plain Language, have nothing in them more than what is obvious to the common sense and reason of all Men. And the Consequence of using them so frequently in matters of Religion, is generally what is so visible in this Author, that they darken the Subject; so that the Question is lost in a multitude of Words, and then Men wander far in pursuit of Truth, when they left it behind them at their first setting out.

But before I come to the particulars, I can't but take notice of that Unreasonableness of People, who never think a Writer sufficiently confuted unless we follow him in all his wandrings; whereas in a Subject of this nature it is enough to shew where he left the Road, and that he is not yet return'd into it. If a Man were to demolish a Fabrick, there is no necessity of doing it stone by stone; it is abundantly enough if he undermine and destroy those Pillars which are the main Supporters of it; for then it falls to the Ground, and is no other than a

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4 *An Answer to a Book Entituled,*

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Heap of Rubbish, though many of the Materials were very good in themselves.

To any reasonable considering Person it were a sufficient Answer to this whole Book, to shew in short, how he mistakes the Question, and proceeds in it, all upon two false Suppositions: One in Logic, in the former part of his Book, viz.

*That Evidence is the only ground of Persuasion.*

The other in Divinity, in the latter part of it;

*That now under the Gospel the Veil is perfectly removed.*

This wou'd satisfy them that he runs all the while upon a false Scent; and they wou'd not take it ill, that we left him to wander by himself. But because these are but few, in comparison of those who take things in the gross, and can't so well discern the Connection and Dependence of one thing upon another: And indeed because Answers are design'd for such as are not able to see into the Fallacies, and not for those who are; therefore I shall trace him step by step, and

and leave nothing in him unanswer'd that hath any appearance of reasoning.

I shall be so far from endeavouring to contradict him in every thing, that I shall grant him all that possibly I can. The worst of Hereticks speak many things that are true; and the more we can with justice allow them, the plainer we shall make their Errors appear; and the more difficult it will be for them to proceed: for this obligeth them either to speak to the pinch of the Question, or be silent.

It can't be expected, in the compass of a Letter, that I should enter into any nice Disquisitions about the nature of Faith in general; or of the Mysteries of the Gospel in particular; or of the use of Reason in Religion: For I am not now going to write a Book upon this Subject; if I were, it should not be in answer to him. I shall at present only shew the Weakness and Folly of this Man's arguing; and lay open the Cheats and Fallacies by which he is either deceiv'd himself, or wou'd impose upon others: That I may relieve the Subject he treats of, from that darkness and obscurity in which he has involv'd it, either through Ignorance or Design.

And



And first, there is great Deceit in the very Title of the Book ; CHRISTIANITY NOT MYSTERIOUS. For by these two words, as it appears by what follows, he wou'd raise a Notion in the heads of People that Christianity, as it is now generally taught and receiv'd among us, is a Religion made up of dark ænigmatical Allusions, and absurd, irrational, and unintelligible Notions; or else of the plainest things wrapt up in mysterious Rites and Ceremonies; and, in short, that our most holy Faith is no other than one great Riddle.

Whereas Christianity is so far from being *Mysterious*, that it is the plainest Institution in the World. All the necessary Points of Faith and Practice are so clear and obvious to every capacity, that it is a Religion calculated for all sorts of People. And therefore it is said of the Times of the Gospel, *That God would put his Law into their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and they should all know him, even from the least of them to the greatest.* That which this Sophister wou'd have inferr'd from hence is, That every thing God should reveal in the times of the Gospel, Men should have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of, as they have  
of



of any thing in Nature. But 'tis evident this Expression was design'd to signifie the Plainness of the Gospel, as to all matters of obligation upon Mens Consciences, in opposition to the Obscurity of the Law; which was so perplex'd with a multitude of Rites and Circumstances of Duty, that it was troublesome and tedious to learn and observe them all. And therefore it is said in the same Text, *That they should not then teach every Man his neighbour, saying, Know the Lord;* because all the necessary knowledge of him and his Laws, was then to be rendred plain and easie. And accordingly, this is now the Glory of our Religion; and its Plainness is one great Argument of its Excellence and Divinity: not but that there are some things revealed in the Gospel, of which we are not now capable of any clear and distinct knowledge. So that there is a great deal of difference between these two Expressions, *Christianity not Mystorious*, and, *There are no Mysteries in Christianity*. The first is very true, and the last is absolutely false.

*Or a Treatise shewing, That there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason.*

Who among us ever said there was? but if this had not been added, his Book wou'd

wou'd have been the shorter by fourteen Pages; and were it not for this, and many other things in it, as little to the purpose, it had been only a stich'd Pamphlet, and cry'd about with Almanacks.

*Nor above Reason.*

This likewise is a dubious Saying; for if it signifies that there are no Expressions in the Gospel that it is impossible for us to know the meaning of, then it is very true: For tho' some Passages are difficult, yet every thing in the Gospel is intelligible; and were there any Expression in it impossible to be understood, so much of it must have been writ to no purpose. But if by *not being above Reason*, be meant that there is nothing spoke of in it, but what we have as compleat and perfect a knowledge of, as we have of any Object of our Senses, it is absolutely false; as I hope will sufficiently appear.

And thus the whole Title Page is nothing else but Equivocation and Sophism. However, here is this to be said for it, that it suits the Book very well; the main drift of which is, to set up Natural Religion in opposition to all Revelation: and these same Equivocations begun in the Title Page, run through every thing he says.

His

His Introduction, wherein he pretends to state the Question, requires no Answer: for, we grant that the Notion of a Mystery is to be taken from the Holy Scriptures, and not from the Opinion of any private Doctor, or Council, or any infallible Head. So there are six Pages of Impertinence cut off already.

I shall only take notice, how he sets out with a sling at the Divines, the Men he's all along so angry with, who gravely tell us,

*That we must adore what we can't comprehend.*

Yes, they tell us we must adore God, and yet we cannot comprehend him. Let him prove we can, if he's able; and without giving himself or us any farther trouble, we will put the whole Controversie to a short issue, and let it lie upon this one point. And if he does not make out, that we have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of the Nature and Attributes of God, as we have of any Proposition in *Euclid*, then what will this Man deserve for that arrogant Expression of his,

*That*



P. 87.  
Last Edition. *That the Divine Being himself cannot with more reason be accounted Mysteries, than the most contemptible of his Creatures?*

His business here was, to have stated the Question, and let us have known what was the true Notion of a Mystery in Scripture. But instead of this, he goes a great way about to tell us, that the true Notion of a Mystery is to be taken no where but from thence, which no one denies. And therefore since he hath not done it, I must; that both He and I may speak to the purpose, and neither of us hereafter trouble the World with Importunence.

Now the clearest way I can think of, for doing of this, is to instance in some particular Mystery of the Gospel; and in that, one for all, to let us see what a Christian Mystery is in the sense of Scripture. I shall take the first I think of, that of the Resurrection of our Bodies.

1 Cor. 15. Saint Paul speaking of this, says, *Behold, I shew you a Mystery! We shall all be chang'd in the twinkling of an eye.* Again, 1 Joh. 3. 2. St. John speaking of the same matter, says, *It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.* From



From whence we see, a Christian Mystery is something which relates to another Life, which it was impossible for us to know, without Divine Revelation; and now that it is reveal'd we know it but in part, and cannot fully comprehend it. Or shorter,

It is a Divine Truth reveal'd to us in part.

As particularly this of *our being changed at the last day into the likeness of Christ*. It is a Truth relating to another Life, which could never have enter'd into our Heads to think of, unless it had been reveal'd to us from Heaven: And now that it is reveal'd to us *that we shall be like him*, yet we know nothing of the manner of it, wherein this likeness will consist.

So that in a Christian Mystery, there is something we do understand, and something that we are wholly ignorant of; and it is call'd a Mystery in respect of both these.

1. It is call'd a Mystery in respect of what we do know of it; because it was a thing so hidden from us, that it was impossible to discover it by those Powers of know-

knowledge which we are now endu'd with. As we could never have known from reason, that good Christians should be *chang'd into the likeness of Christ*. Now it is this part of the Mystery which makes it an Article of Faith, and obligatory upon our Consciences to believe it. Because we understand well what it is for a Body to be rais'd, and alter'd for the better, and we know perfectly what it is for one thing to be chang'd into the likeness of another.

2. It is call'd a Mystery in respect of that part of it which as yet we have no notion of; because 'tis utterly impossible for us in this Life to attain to any knowledge of it by Reason assisted with the greatest degree of Revelation that is afforded us. And thus it is impossible for us in this Life to have any notion of the manner of that change into the likeness of Christ: for it is expressly said, *That it doth not yet appear what we shall be*. From whence I shall infer only thus much at present, that what we do know, and what is yet conceal'd from us, are in gross call'd the same Mystery. And that as we are oblig'd to believe what is reveal'd of it, so likewise we are at the same time oblig'd from express words of Scripture to believe, that there is more in it than we are now able to comprehend.

Nay,

Nay, that there is something in it which we have no notion or *Idea* at all of.

This is the notion of a *Mystery* in the sense of Scripture ; and therefore now we see the Question is not, *Whether a Man can believe what he knows nothing of, which no Man in his wits ever yet affirm'd.* ; for there is a flat contradiction in the terms ; and yet this is the main thing he labours to disprove, and by which he endeavours to confound his Readers. But the Question is,

*Whether there be not some things in the Gospel, concerning which we are bound to believe, that there is much more in them than we are now able to comprehend.*

If there be such things, as it appears in this instance of the Resurrection, then there is something in the Gospel that may properly be call'd a *Mystery* ; and in so strict a sense, that nothing else can be call'd a *Mystery* with so great propriety of Speech, as will appear more fully hereafter.

The case would have been the same, had I taken any other *Mystery* for an instance, either the eternal Generation of the Son ; or the Procession of the Holy  
B Ghost ;



Ghost ; or the Union of the Divine and Human Nature ; or the Operations of the Holy Spirit in the act of Grace ; or the Felicity and Joys of Heaven, &c. and if it be requir'd I am ready to quit this, and take any other for an instance which he shall pitch upon.

Now this is the thing that lay upon him to disprove ; but he durst not go about proving or disproving any thing, till he has perplex'd the matter in hand, and amus'd his Reader with fantastical terms and distinctions. If he had meant honestly, and thought himself able to go through with what he undertook ; he would have spoke plain undisguis'd reason, and proceeded immediately to the proof of the Question. But instead of this, he finds it necessary to spend above one third of his Book in losing of it : wherefore I must take my leave of it for some time as he doth, to rescue the Subject from obscurity, and force this Man to speak plainly and intelligibly.

P. 8. 9, 10. And first he tells us, *That reason is not the Man that bath it ; nor the things to be reason'd about ; nor is it our Appetites and Desires ; nor is it Authority.* What trifling this is ! He should have added, that it was not the Head that forms the Thoughts ;



Thoughts ; nor the Fingers that write them ; nor is it the Brain it self ; No ! nor is my Reason, the Reason of another Man. Our Readers are like to be much the wiser for this.

After this he proceedeth to shew what P. 116  
it is, in his second Chapter ; the whole  
substance of which in other words is only  
this ; that it is not *Simplex Apprehensio*,  
nor *Judicium*, but that it is *Discursus* that  
is properly call'd Reason : Which last he  
will not express by *Syllogism*, the word  
for it that is commonly receiv'd : but he  
must call it, *The application of intermediate P. 136*  
*Idea's to other Idea's that are distant from*  
*one another, and lie too far asunder in the*  
*mind.* And this he explains by the mea-  
suring of two Houses with a line ; because  
you can't take one House in one hand, and  
the other in another, and so clap them to-  
gether, to find out which is highest. What  
isthis but making a Syllogism, by apply-  
ing the *Medius Terminus* to the parts of the  
Question ? and to what purpose is all this,  
unless he thinks that his Readers have not  
learned Logick ?

Yes, he hath a drift in it, which is ve-  
ry observable in all our modern Writers  
against reveal'd Religion ; for unless he  
first lays down false rules of reasoning, the

consequences he wou'd make, will not appear to be true. Tho' he's in the right of it thus far, and it is no more than what is in every common Logick ; Yet what follows is his own, and is both trifling and false.

A. 18.

For first, his four ways of coming to the knowledge of any thing, are very ill put together, and the distinction frivolous. *The Experience of the Senses, the Experience of the Mind ( i. e. )* in usual speaking, Sense and Reason ; *Human and Divine Revelation.* Now at first sight who does not see that any revelation by God or Man, must enter into the mind by one of these two ways, either by our Senses or our Reason ; so that there are but these two ways still.

And then as to his making *Authority a means only of Information, and \* Evidence*

\* To make what is to be said upon this head more intelligible, the Reader may take notice that by Evidence he means nothing more than the knowledge of a thing in the Mind. So that these two Expressions are the same. *Evidence is the only ground of Perswasion, and, You can give your assent to nothing but what you know.* All the difference is, that one is plain, and the other affectedly obscure. But I must use his own Cant, otherwise though I speak ever so much to the purpose, he will not think himself answer'd.

*the only ground of Perswasion* ; which is the fundamental Error of his Book, and indeed of all these modern Writers who make such a stir about Reason and Evidence ; we shall see the falsity of it if we consider *Authority* in respect of the Person who is inform'd, and of him who gives the Information.

1. In respect of the Person who is inform'd, I grant it is a means of Information ; for how comes any one to the knowledge of a thing he was wholly ignorant of before, and which he could not attain of himself ? why, by another's revealing it to him.

2. When considered in the Informer, it is a ground of Perswasion ; for why do I give my assent to any Proposition related to me from another ? because of the veracity and ability of the Person that makes the Information.

But this cunning Man will ask, How can that which is inseparable from another be the ground of any assent in my mind ? I answer, It is the opinion that is in me of his ability and veracity is the cause of my assent. The ground of this opinion indeed is Evidence : But then this Evidence is a ground of perswasion in re-



spect of the worth of the Person only ; and that Worth or Authority of his, is the only ground of perswasion in respect of the substance of what he relates to me. From whence it is plain, that though we grant that Evidence in the Mind is a ground of perswasion, yet it is not the only ground. And therefore to make this very clear and undeniable, let us take an instance of two Propositions, wherein these two grounds may be consider'd separately.

*The three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones.*

In a Person who is able to demonstrate this Proposition, the only ground of his perswasion or assent, is the evidence of it in the Mind : For the reason why he gives his assent to it, is because he finds out the agreement of the Extreame's by intermediate Idea's, and thus as he speaks, the demonstration at last becomes self-evident,

But as to the substance of this Proposition.

*When Christ appears we shall be like him,*

The authority of the Person relating it, is the only ground of perswasion. For

as I should never have known this if it had not been reveal'd, and therefore in this respect Authority is a means of information; so I should never have believed it, if I had not known that this Revelation had come from God. And therefore *Authority* consider'd in the Revealer, is the only ground of my assent to the substance of this Proposition.

But to make this plainer, we must consider that all natural Truths which do not necessarily require Revelation, need no other ground of perswasion but *Evidence*; but those which do, have both these grounds of perswasion, *Evidence* and *Authority*; as will appear if we distinguish the three things in every relation,

1. The meaning of the words.
2. The relation it self, or the very act of Revelation.
3. The \* substance of the thing intended by the Revelation.

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\* To prevent all ambiguity, I do not take the word *Substance* here strictly, as it is oppos'd to the modes and accidents of the thing, but as it includes them.

20. As to the meaning of the words, and truth of the revelation in any proposition, Evidence is the ground of perswasion: for why do I believe this Proposition, *When Christ appears we shall be like him?* Because I know the meaning of the words; and because there is an evidence in my Mind of its coming from God, from those proofs to my Senses and Reason, which argue the Divine Mission of the Person who relates it; and consequently the Divinity of the relation it self. But as to the *Substance* of that Proposition, *Authority* is the only ground of Perswasion, as indeed it is in all relations whatsoever.

P. 43. and  
128.

And therefore 'tis now plain how *Divine* and *Humane Authority* differ as well in degrees of *Perspicuity* as of *Certitude*. And why? because when a meer Man relates any thing to me, though I allow the Veracity of the Man, yet it is impossible for him to give such Proof to my Senses and my Reason of the reality and substance of what he relates, as God can; And therefore cannot raise so great a degree of Evidence in my Mind. Tho' I suppose this Man's relation to be true (so that this relation of his, and one of God's shall be upon equal Terms as to certitude, being



being both alike true) yet this assent of mine to what the Man relates, is more precarious and worse founded than my faith of any divine proposition; because this is more clear and distinct, as having a degree of Evidence in the mind which the other wants\*,

I shall make this plain by an Instance. A Man tells me that *Rome* is swallow'd up by an Earthquake; I have such an opinion of the veracity of the Man, that I give my assent to it, and believe it firmly.

Let us suppose afterwards that God reveals this same to me. As yet there is the same degree of Perspicuity allowing the Ability and Veracity of the Man; for then both God and he tell truth in this. But if God confirm the relation by a Miracle, this shall raise an Evidence or degree of knowledge in my Mind, beyond any thing the Man is able to effect; and consequently the revelation of the same thing from God makes it clearer, and gives it a greater degree of perspicuity than it had before.

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\* That which may make this Paragraph obscure, is the mistaken *Evidence* in the Mind, or *Knowledge*, for those Proofs which are only the cause of it.

But it will be yet more clear, That *Authority* is a ground of Perswasion, if we consider, that all Evidence in the Mind proceeds from Evidence in the Thing. Now all Truths in themselves are equally evident; but in respect of us they are not so: for some we are capable of knowing distinctly, and some we are not, because they are not suited to our present Capacities. In respect of those divine Truths, or of that part of them which is suited to our present Capacities, *Evidence* is the ground of Perswasion; but in respect of that part of it, which is not suited to our Capacities, we have seen, *Authority*, is.

And thus we see, how we may give our Assent to many Propositions, for the substance of which we have no Evidence in the Mind. Why then, says he, a Man shall believe what he doth not know; and that is giving his Assent to nothing. But this is a Quibble; and to remove it effectually, let us take up the same Propositions again.

*The three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones.*

'Tis plain, a Man who knows what a Triangle is, and what it is for one Angle to be equal to another, may give his Assent to this Proposition; though perhaps it may be utterly impossible ever to bear the Demonstration into his Head. And though he doth not comprehend it, yet he cannot be said to be ignorant of it. And the only ground of his Assent is, the Authority of some person who is able to demonstrate it.

And thus it is with a Divine Proposition. *When Christ appears we shall be like him.* Any one who knows what it is for a Body to be rais'd, and for one thing to be like another, may give his Assent to this Proposition; though it be impossible for him to know wherein this Likeness will consist, or to demonstrate that it will certainly be so. And therefore the Authority of God is the only grounds of Perswasion in this Proposition; and no Evidence is necessary any farther than to understand the meaning of the Words, and the truth of the Revelation it self. So groundless is that main Principle of his, that a Man can give his Assent to nothing but what he comprehends: whereas the contrary is as clear as the Light, from what hath been said.

But



But farther, from this Supposition of his, that *Authority is only a means of Information*, and *Evidence the only ground of Perswasion*, these two Absurdities will directly follow.

I. That a Man can never be deceived in any thing; for if *Evidence in the Mind* be the only ground of Perswasion, a Man can never give his Assent but where there is this Evidence: for if there be but one only Cause, the Effect can never proceed but from that Cause; and what is evident, that is, what is truly known, can never deceive.

He hath no way of evading this, but by saying, That the Cause of Error is the giving Assent where there is none, or not sufficient Evidence in the Mind; which destroys every thing he says upon this Head: for this supposes that there may be some other Cause of Assent besides Evidence. But if we suppose Evidence to be the only Cause of Assent, then it must vary in degrees together with its Cause; so that a clear Evidence shall have a firm Assent, and the least degree of Evidence shall have but the least degree of Assent: So that still a Man can never be deceiv'd in any thing, or in any de-

degree. And for him to say, that we may think we have this Evidence when we have it not, is still supposing that there is some other ground of Assent: Nay worse, 'tis supposing that a thing may be evident to us, and not evident at the same time.

2. It will follow, that no Person, either God or Man, can be believ'd on their Word. For, what they relate is evident to the Mind, or it is not: if it be, then they give their Assent to that *Evidence*, and not to the Person who relates it. If it be not evident (*i. e.*) according to him, if he doth not know it perfectly, he must utterly reject it. And thus, in a few words, he destroys all Faith, both Humane and Divine. For thus he proceeds: A Man can believe nothing but what he knows; and he knows nothing but what he comprehends; and then he is said to comprehend a thing when he hath a clear and distinct Idea of it, (*i. e.*) when it is as clear as a Mathematical Demonstration; or as evident as what he sees with his Eyes: for you know, Seeing is Believing all the World over.

Having thus made it plain, that *Evidence* is not the only ground of Perswasion;

on; I come now to consider his *clear and distinct Idea's*, which he lays down as the ground of this Evidence. This Opinion carries a face of Fairness and Probability, and insinuates it self by the common Inclinations of Men, who are naturally averse to all restraint in thinking as well as acting, and are as uneasie at any Fetters upon their Mind as upon their Body. They wou'd not willingly be oblig'd to give their Assent to any thing but what they have clear and distinct Idea's of; and if it be not thus in the Christian Religion, even well-meaning People are apt to wish it were so.

Now because I design this Letter in Answer not only to this Book, but to all the Opposers of *Revelation* and *Mysteries*, upon the like Principles of setting up for *Reason* and *Evidence*, and clear and distinct Notions of every thing they give their Assent to; I shall be very particular in the consideration of this point. And I hope to make out plainly to them, the deep Deceit that lies at the bottom of all this; and to convince them that God, by requiring their Assent to his Revelations, doth as little violence to their Mind as to their Body; and that he leaves their Reason as full a scope, and as great a liberty in matters of Religion as in any thing.



thing else. So that they will find us as great Sticklers for *clear Idea's*, *strict Reason*, and *Evidence*, as they can be for their hearts.

These Men speak much truth; but make false Inferences, never considering the difference between these two Propositions, but confounding them in all their Discourses.

*Clear and distinct Idea's are the foundation of all our Knowledge and Assent; which consider'd in a right sense, is undoubtedly true. But for that other, which they make a consequence of it, it is absolutely false; viz.*

*That we can believe nothing but what we have a clear and distinct Idea of.* For the clear Conceptions we have of some things, give us a confus'd and imperfect Knowledge of others; and it is upon the account of those things whereof we have clear and distinct Idea's, that we give a firm Assent to the Existence of things whereof we have no Idea at all. So that these two Sayings widely differ; as much as Truth from Falshood.

*I can give no Assent without clear and distinct Idea's. And,*

*I must*

*I must have a clear and distinct Idea of every thing I give my Assent to.*

Now because this is the fundamental Error of all our quaint Reasoners against *Revelation*, and the Fallacy whereby they impose upon others; I shall express myself as distinctly and plainly in this matter as I can.

But by the way we must observe, that since it appears undeniably from what hath been said, that Evidence is not the only ground of Perswasion, it is a direct and immediate Consequence from thence, that there is no necessity of having a clear and distinct Idea of what I give my Assent to. Not but that I allow there is a necessity of clear and distinct Idea's of some things, to make us give our Assent to others. And therefore though Authority be a ground of Perswasion, yet what this Man wou'd insinuate doth not follow; *viz.* That *therefore all its Relations, or any of them, are to be receiv'd without Examen.* For all the Revelations of God admit of the strictest Enquiry, and severest Search of our Reason; and it is this that enables us to distinguish them from the wild Extravagancies of Enthusiasts, and the Delusions of the Devil. It is by  
the

the help of this that I now shew the difference between his Fallacies and the Truth of God. And in order to set them both in a clear light, I shall fix the signification of this most ambiguous word, which he hath compell'd me to make so much use of; for otherwise we shall but grope for Truth in the dark.

What is meant by an *Adequate Idea*, is sure and fixt, (*i. e.*) a full and comprehensive knowledge of any thing, so as to know all that is knowable in it. But how far short, what Men call a clear and distinct Idea, comes of that adequate conception of a thing, is impossible to determine, because our knowledge of things is varied almost in infinite degrees; insomuch that perhaps we have not Ideas of any two things in Nature, that are equally clear and distinct. And therefore to cut off all Metaphysical Niceties, and insist upon nothing but genuine Reason; by a clear and distinct Idea, as it relates to this Controversie, is signified, *as clear and distinct a conception as we ordinarily have of the things of this World.* For these are the two main things he contends for in his whole Book.

I. That we have as clear and distinct Ideas of all things revealed to us in the Gospel, as we have of the ordinary Phenomena of Nature. And,

C

2. That



2. That we are oblig'd to give our Assent to them no farther than we have clear and distinct Idea's of them.

In direct opposition to which, I shall lay down these two Propositions.

1. That we are so far from having clear and distinct Idea's of those things of another World which are revealed to us, that we have no proper or immediate Idea at all of them. And,

2. That though we have no proper or immediate Idea of those things, yet we are bound to believe them; and that our Assent to them, according to his own principle, is founded upon clear and distinct Idea's.

I. As to the first; by a proper and immediate Idea, I mean, a conception or notion of the thing as it is in it self. By a mediate or improper Idea, I mean, a Notion we form of any thing in our Minds by Analogy or \* Similitude. Whether this distinction hath been

\* Not that worldly Objects can have any real likeness or resemblance of the things reveal'd, but they are such as God hath made choice of for that purpose; and therefore we may make this inference from his Wisdom, that they bear the greatest Analogy with them of any things that fall within the compass of our Knowledge now.

made

made use of or no, I know not; but sure I am, 'tis a very necessary one, and of excellent use to fet the bounds and measures of our Knowledge, and to lay open the true nature of our Christian Faith: that we may clearly apprehend where Knowledge ends, and Faith proceeds alone. And I am perswaded, a due observation of this distinction, would effectually put an end to all this Controversie about Mysteries.

Now what I say is this; That we have no proper Idea's of the things of another World, but frame to our selves Conceptions of them, from those things in this World whereof we have clear and distinct Idea's. And to make this appear, let us consider that there are but two ways of God's revealing any thing to us; either by giving us new Faculties, or by adapting his Revelations to those we have, which are our *Senses* and our *Reason*. He grants that it is not by giving us any new Faculties; and therefore since this is done by adapting himself to those Faculties we already have, then 'tis plain that he must make use of such Words and Notions as fall within their proper sphere.

Now that we can have no proper or immediate Idea from Sense or Reason;

of the real nature of any thing relating to another Life as it is in it self; or indeed any other Notion of them than that of *Being* in general; will best appear by instanting in the particulars. I shall begin with God himself and his Attributes, that incomprehensible Being which this bold Man affirms, to have nothing more mysterious in it than a *stock* or a *stone*.

1. And first, our Imagination can frame no likeness or resemblance of God, as it can do of material and sensible Objects; and therefore the *Israelites* were forbid to represent him by any figure or resemblance, because they saw no similitude. And to the same purpose are many Expressions in the Scriptures, as *Isaiah* 40. ver. 18. *To whom then will you liken God? or what likeness will you compare unto him?* So that I hope I have gain'd thus much, that God is more mysterious than a stock or a stone, because we can frame some imagination of these, but none at all of him.

2. But, as we can form no similitude from the *Senses*, so neither hath the *Reason* any the least glimpse of his real Nature as he is in himself, for the only way we have of forming an Idea of him is either negatively, by removing from him all the



the Imperfections of the Creatures, or by enlarging those excellencies we find in these, and attributing them to God. So that he is now incomprehensible to us, not only as we have no clear and distinct knowledge of him, but as we have no proper Idea at all of his real nature. And therefore when he made a particular Revelation of himself, it was only by the name I AM, which denoted nothing more of him than barely his Existence; and plainly intimated that it was impossible for them to conceive any thing farther of him. For this reason 'tis said that hereafter *we shall see him as he is*, because we have no knowledge of him now, but by mediation of those Idea's we have of the things of this World. And to make this farther appear, let us consider him in those Attributes of his, whereof we are thought to have the most clear and distinct Idea's; And,

i. 'Tis reveal'd to us that *God is a Spirit*; by which we really understand nothing more, than that he is a Being that is not not matter; which is so far from a proper immediate Idea, that it is not a positive one; for all the notion we have of a Spirit is that it thinks, and that it moves. As to the first of these, the only reason why we attribute it to a Spirit,

is because we can demonstrate that meer matter cannot think ; And therefore we conclude it must be something else that can, though we have no notion at all of what it is. Besides we can't conceive what thinking is in a pure Spirit ; we know nothing of the true manner of that operation in them, which is answerable to knowledge in us. We can conceive Thinking now, only as it is perform'd by help of material Organs, and more immediately by the Fibres of the Brain. But when we set our selves to consider it abstractedly from these, we have no Idea at all of it. So that we now form as gross a notion of thinking in a pure Spirit as we do of its motion, when we walk by dragging one Leg after another.

And then as to its motion, when we say a Spirit moves, we don't make this inference from any knowledge we have of the true nature of it, but because we can prove that matter can't move it self, and thus by denying it to matter, we really do nothing more than give it to something else ; but what that something is we know not. For we know not how it moves, or how it communicates this motion to matter. Nor indeed can we distinguish Thought and Motion in a Spirit ; and as far as we may make a conjecture

jecture of what we have no Idea of, in all likelihood they are the same. And therefore I can't but wonder that any one should affirm, that we have as clear and distinct an Idea of Spirit as of Body. That we have as good proof for its existence, as we have for that of matter I grant; but to say our Idea's of their Modes and Properties are equally clear and distinct, appears to be a very groundless assertion.

2. As for *Infinity* another Attribute of God, the only way we are said to form a notion of this, is by continu'd accumulation, and then a confus'd Idea of what remains when we are weary of this. But 'tis plain there is not one addition we make but *Ipsa facto* we destroy its being; the very thought of addition, does of all things in the World carry the Mind farthest from the real nature of it. And how little this will help us to any immediate positive Idea of it is plain, because that when we have imagin'd all the Atoms that go to the composition of the Universe, told as many times over as we can heap up numbers for it, we are as far from any true Idea of Infinity, as when we began to reckon *Two*. Had I said *One* we should in all likelihood have been nearer it; as an instant of time hath been found a better representation of Eternity, than



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than the Successions of numberless Ages. And therefore it were more conducive to true Knowledge, to own our ignorance, and say it is a Perfection which we know nothing of ; but we form a gross, a scanty notion of it, by perpetual addition to the widest space, or greatest number, or longest duration we can think of.

3. As to his *Omnipresence*, we have no Idea at all of it, for it is utterly impossible for us to conceive, how the same thing should be here, and there, and every where in the same Instant ; and therefore we frame to our selves a gross notion of it by that of continu'd extension ; though at the same time we are sure this must be utterly inconsistent with the real nature of God.

4. And as for the *Prescience of God*, we are so far from having any notion of it, that it cannot enter into our heads to think how God should actually see a thing that hath no being : for God sees things to come, as we see what is now. So that we can no more conceive it, than we can conceive how a thing may be, and not be at the same time ; and therefore we frame to our selves the best Idea we can of it (i. e.) from those previous Ideas of things in our Mind ; which doth not at all

all represent this Attribute of Prescience as it is in God, who sees them actually and *ex parte rei*. Nor can we conceive how this Prescience of his is reconcileable with the contingency of things, though we are sure it is so, from those Prophecies of very minute Circumstances, many hundreds of years before they came to pass.

I might thus run through all the Attributes of God, and shew in every one of them, how we make to our selves some representations of them, by compounding and enlarging those Idea's we have either of sensible Objects, or of the operations of our own Minds. And thus we represent the *Wisdom*, and *Power*, and *Justice*, and *Holiness*, and *Mercy*, &c. of God, from the scanty Notions we have of these things in our selves, though they exhibit to us no more of the real nature of these things as they are in God, than continued extension doth of his Omnipresence; or a great number doth of his Infinity; or many ages of his Eternity. So that in all our thoughts of that divine Being, we don't proceed thus. The nature of God is such, therefore these things follow. But these things are the greatest Perfections we are able to conceive, and therefore by help of these we form the best

best and most honourable Idea of God, that is possible for us in this condition of Infirmary and Blindness that we are now in. Not but that after we have framed the biggest Idea of God our Minds are capable of, by the greatest Enlargement of these Perfections; after all, 'tis as gross a representation of him as Darkness is of Light: and expresseth nothing of the real Nature of that incomprehensible Being to us; nor do they give us the least glimpse of him as he is in himself.

2. But Secondly, As we can have no such proper and immediate Idea of God himself, so neither have we such Ideas of any thing relating to another World. And therefore it is that the Glory of Heaven is reveal'd to us under the notion of Light; the greatness and splendour of that place, by that of a Kingdom; and the Joys of Heaven by sensual Pleasures, such as *Eating* and *Drinking*; the Operation of Grace, by the nourishment of our Bodies, &c. and when God himself is spoke of, 'tis always by analogy with the Members of a Human Body, and the operations of our Minds. Thus he is mention'd as having Hands and Feet, as Seeing, and Hearing, and as being affected with all the passions of a Human Soul; be-



because he hath no other way to speak of himself to us now, since we have neither Words nor Idea's, to think or speak of him after any other manner; or indeed of any other Objects of another World.

And therefore it is that the Spirit of God in all his Revelations, hath made use, not only of the *Words* and *Phrases* commonly receiv'd and understood; but likewise of those *common notions* in the minds of Men, of things in this World, to represent Truths, which are in respect of us now unconceivable; and for which there are as yet no capacities in our nature. So that in truth all the Idea's we at present have of the things of another World, are no other than a sort of *Types* and *Figures* of things, the real nature of which is totally obscured from us.

And this is the literal meaning of those words of St. Paul, *That now we see through a Glass darkly*, (i. e.) by analogy only<sup>12.</sup> with the things of this World. But then *Face to Face* (i. e.) we shall have as immediate a View of those heavenly Objects, as we have now of these things which only represent them to us. So that when we are said to have these divine Truths reveal'd to us in *part*, the meaning is not, that any real part of the thing, as

it is in it self exhibited to our view, and the rest obscur'd ; or that we have any indistinct view of the thing it self, as we see an Object at a great distance. But the meaning is, that the *whole* is reveal'd to us under the resemblance of some things in this World, whereof we have clear and distinct Idea's.

And thus it is plain that though we may be said to have *Idea's* of God and Divine things, yet they are not *immediate or proper* ones, but a sort of composition we make up from our *Idea's* of worldly Objects ; which at the utmost amounts to no more than a *Type* or *Figure*, by which something in another World is signified, of which we have no more notion than a Blind Man hath of *Light*. And now that I am fallen into this Metaphor, which seems well to explain the nature of the thing, let us pursue it a little ; and suppose, that to a Man who had never seen or heard any thing of it, it were to be reveal'd that there was such a thing as *Light*. This Man as yet hath neither a *Name* nor a *Notion* for it, nor any capacity of conceiving what it is in it self. 'Tis plain therefore God wou'd not reveal this to him by the name of *Light*, a word wholly unknown to him ; nor by stamping on his Mind any  
im-

immediate Idea of the thing it self : for then it were utterly impossible for him to communicate this Revelation to others as blind as himself ; for nothing but the same Almighty Impression could do that. So that this Revelation must be made by Words and Notions which are already in him. And accordingly when he is told, that it is a thing which can diffuse it self in an instant many thousands of miles round ; and enable him to know in a Moment what order all things lay at a great distance from him, and what proportion they bore one to another ; nay that it could make him know where the Heavens lay ; and by the help of this he should there discern at once, a vast and almost infinite number of very pleasant Bodies ; and in short that without the help of his Stick or his Hand, he should know every thing that lay before him. After all, 'tis plain this Man would form to himself an Idea of *Light* from his *Touch*, he would think it very like *feeling*, and perhaps call it by that Name ; because this was the best way he had of distinguishing one thing from another : and therefore would conclude that those *Bodies* he heard of, must needs be wondrous soft and smooth.

Just



Just thus do we conceive the things of another World, so that we may rack our invention, and turn and wind all those Idea's we have into ten thousand different shapes, and yet never make up any *likeness* or *similitude*, of the real Nature of those Objects of another World.

And now I hope, he will grant it a thing possible for God to make such a Revelation as this to a Blind Man. And yet by this concession he destroys his whole Book. For upon his Principles it were a thing utterly impossible for any Man that was born blind, to believe there is such a thing as *Light*, upon the testimony either of *God* or *Man*. For without the use of *one* of his *Eyes* at least, he's so far from having any clear and distinct Idea of it; that he cou'd have no Idea at all of it as it is in it self; and therefore must never believe that there is such a thing. Now it were a very pretty way of revealing the nature of *Light* to this Man, by opening of his *Eyes*. Then I must confess *Light* wou'd be no longer a Mystery to him. And when this Man makes us understand (as he hath undertaken) the nature of *God*, and the things of another World, as perfectly as that Man doth the nature of *Light* when his *Eyes* are

open'd, I will yield. But till then, I must freely own ours to be the case of that Blind Man, in respect of all the Mysteries of our Religion: and before this wonderful Book of his comes out, I am very positive that nothing less than the Almighty Power of God is able to perform what he promises, since it requires the alteration of our whole Nature, and the enlargement of all our Faculties.

But perhaps he will object here, If it be a thing thus impossible for us to have proper Idea's of these things of another World, what necessity was there for any revelation at all of them? wou'd not the immediate Objects of Sense and Reason have done so well, without farther reference to any thing beyond them? I Answer, no. For the discovery of the things of another World even thus far, is absolutely necessary to make Men good and vertuous. Though we had ever so great a conviction of the innate excellency of *Vertue* it self, yet this wou'd bind us but like a Spider's Webb. We might perhaps have admir'd it for it's delicate and excellent contexture, but it wou'd have been of no strength, to restrain the unruly inclinations of our Nature. The excellencies of *Vertue*, without these Revelations, had been a sort of Bonds and Fetters which,

which wou'd have sat as loose upon us as the Air; they wou'd have serv'd at best only to have rais'd our admiration, but never to have influenc'd our practice. And therefore since they were thus necessary, and that we are not capable of any knowledge of them by *direct and immediate intuition*, there was no other way of revealing them to us, but by *analogy* with the things of this World. And this Imperfect way of Revelation is sufficient to answer all the ends of God, since it is abundantly enough to all the purposes of Vertue and Holiness: as the motions of the heavenly Bodies represented in a *Sphere*, is sufficient to answer all the ends of humane life, though the *Hypothesis* be all very different from it, and represents nothing less to us, than the reality of the thing.

It being, as I hope by this time very plain, that we have no such proper or immediate Idea's, either of God or the things of another World, as of the things in this; we may from hence see the specious trifling of those abstracted *Metaphysical* Brains, who bend their endeavours to bring down these hidden things to the level of our present capacities of knowledge: whereas the finding out a way of commerce with the Moon, or how to  
make



make a visit to the fixt Stars, is a grave and serious thought to it.

The other Proposition I laid down in direct opposition to him was,

2. *That though we have no proper or immediate Idea's of these things, yet that we are bound to believe them. And, That our belief of them is founded upon clear and distinct Idea's. Not of themselves, but of those things by which they are represented to us, and because of those Proofs we have from thence of their Existence to our Senses and our Reason.*

And here we are to observe what I made out before, *viz.* That in every Mystery there are two things to be consider'd. 1. *Something that we do comprehend fully,* and Secondly, *Something that we have no notion at all of.* As to this latter part of it, it is wholly exempted from the disquisition of Reason, and Faith alone can reach it, for our Reason fails us where we have no Idea's. So that in respect of this part of the Mystery, these and such like expressions of his are very true, *viz.*

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*That the intermediate Idea can be no proof, where the agreement with both Idea's of the question is not evident. And again,*

*That when we have no Notions or Idea's of a thing, we cannot Reason about it all. For, as I have shewn, we have no proper immediate Idea's of the things revealed to us in the Gospel ; and therefore we can't speak one word of sense about the real nature of them, as they are in themselves.*

All beyond this World, as yet, is but a *dark and empty Void* to us ; and we may send out our Reason to range it backward and forward incessantly, till Soul and Body part, and never discover the least glimpse of light, into the true nature of any thing beyond this scanty *Sphere* of ours. We have no *intermediate Idea's* to make Inferences concerning them, and if we had, there cou'd be no application of them to things whereof we have no notion. So that thus far every thing of another World is a Mystery to us, and a *new born Infant* knows as much of them, bating their *existence only*, as the learnedst Man in the World.

But

But as to that other part of them which is knowable by us (*i. e.*) as far as we are able to conceive these divine things, by *analogy* with the things of this World, either under the *similitude of sensible Objects*, or the *Operations of our own Mind*, they fall entirely under the consideration of our Reason. Thus far we have as clear and distinct *Idea's* of them, as we have of other ordinary worldly Objects. And in respect of this part of our *Christian Mysteries*, all these sayings of his are very true, *viz.*

*That nothing reveal'd is more exempted from the disquisitions of Reason, than the ordinary Phænomena of Nature.* And,

*That nothing in the Gospel is contrary to Reason, or above it.*

For all the Revelations of God are in a way suitable to those powers of knowledge we have, and he requires us to believe nothing but what is just and reasonable. For, as he says, *To act tyrannically does only become the Devil.* In respect of this part of the Mystery, all that he contends for, holds true. We must have *clear and distinct Idea's* of the things; we must have *intermediate Idea's* to find out



*the agreement between the Extremes.* What need I instance in any more particulars? I allow him thus far, all the *Clearness, Perspicuity, Evidence and Reason* any Man can wish for. And all the request I would make to these Men of Reason is, That they wou'd cease to ask for a *rational account*, of what neither they nor we can have any *notion* of; and that as to every thing else in Religion they wou'd be as *exact, and critical,* and severe in their Reasonings as possible they can. And unless they find more reason to believe the truth of those things reveal'd in the Gospel, than it is possible for them to have for what any Man says; then I will allow them to be the only Men of *Sense*, and that we are only *soft and credulous* Fools.

'Tis every Man's *native Right and Privilege* to judge and examine every thing, before he gives his Assent to it; and 'tis this alone which distinguisheth our *Christian Faith* from *blind Credulity*, because it admits of such enquiry. For though we have no *notion* of the things themselves, yet we are sufficiently assur'd of the truth of them, from those things we fully understand: And the constant method of arguing in divine things is this; from the things whereof we have *clear and distinct*  
Idea's,

*Idea's*, we infer the existence of those things whereof we have *no Idea* at all. As for instance in this Proposition.

*This Corruptible shall put on Incorruption.*

I have a clear and distinct Idea of what it is for a Body to *corrupt* and *rot*; and likewise I know what an *athletick* habit of body is, and for a person to have a firm Constitution, and to remain always in the utmost *beauty* and *vigour* of a blooming Youth, which is the best Idea of Incorruption that I can frame to my self now. And the reason I give my Assent to this Proposition, is not because I have any, the least notion of that *immutable state of Perfection* which a Body shall be rais'd to, and which is here represented under the notion of *Incorruption*: But because I have sufficient proof for the truth of it, in this Type or Figure by which it is represented to me, that it is possible for me to have, (*i. e.*) the concurring Testimonies of *Prophecies*, *Miracles*, and the *Excellency of that Doctrine* which they preach'd, who were made the instruments of revealing this to me.

And thus likewise, though we have no Idea of God as he is in himself, yet we infer his *Existence* from those clear and

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distinct Idea's we have of the things of Nature ; which is the very meaning of the *Apostle* when he says, *All that was to be known of God was manifested in them, for the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made.* It was for want of some Idea of him as he is, that made the Heathen World run into *Idolatry*, and represent him under the similitude of some of the *meanest of his Creatures.* And now by *Revelation*, what we come to know more of him is, that we can have no Idea at all of him as he is in himself: and as it follows, it is this will one day render all *Infidels without excuse*, because though they had no clear and distinct Idea's of the things of another World, yet God did not leave them without sufficient proof of their Existence ; nay, greater than it was possible for them to have of any thing else.

From whence we see, that there is an *essential* difference between *Humane* and *Divine Faith*, because the proof on which one is grounded is *fallible*, and that of the other *infallible*; and consequently a greater degree of knowledge in the one than in the other. This is one reason of using these two words *Faith* and *Knowledge* so promiscuously in some places of the New Testa-



Testament, because our belief of a meer Man is but a precarious assent; but the *Christian Faith* may be called *Knowledge* in a more peculiar sense, because we are obliged to believe nothing but what we have infallible proof for. Which again shews the falsity of that Saying of his, which he lays such a stress upon; That *Divine and Humane Revelations do not differ in degrees of perspicuity*. For where there is a greater degree of *Knowledge*, there is a greater degree of *Perspicuity*, but in the *Christian Faith* there is a greater degree of *Knowledge*: Ergo.

And now we see plainly the Error of those Men, who out of a *mistaken zeal* for the *Mysteries* of Christianity, have set themselves to defend them, by bringing them down to the *Level* of a Man: and endeavouring by *thin-spun Notions*, to solve the greatest Difficulties in them upon the Principles of Reason. These are very rash and inconsiderate Attempts; and when all is done, their failing in what they aim at, is the best Defence of our *Christian Mysteries*. If we had not a *determinate sense* for the words wherein they are reveal'd, they could be no *Articles* of Faith. And if they cou'd be fully solv'd and explain'd, they wou'd cease to be *Mysteries*. This hath given the Enemies

mies of our Religion a great advantage; for when they find they are not to be thoroughly accounted for (as indeed they are not) upon the strength of Reason, together with the assistance of that degree of *Revelation* we now have, they utterly reject them, as *inconsistent* with those powers of Knowledge which God hath given us. Never distinguishing between that part of a Mystery, which we understand clearly and distinctly, and will admit of the strictest Enquiry of the *most* *severe* Reasoner; and the *substance* of the thing signified by it, whereof we have no Idea at all, and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to raise any Disputes about it,

It wou'd certainly be very pleasant, to hear two such *quick-sighted* blind Men as I spoke of, dispute warmly concerning the nature of *Light*, and how many *seeming Contradictions* they wou'd start concerning it; as, *How any thing cou'd be in every point of such a vast space in the same instant? How it was possible for them to touch so many millions of Objects at once?* Since this was their chief way of distinguishing one thing from another, &c. and fall out about these *imaginary Difficulties* irreconcilably. Whereas upon supposition that it was reveal'd to them that there was *such a thing*; which shou'd make them very

ry happy some time or other, when God shou'd open their eyes: Their business was not to consider whether they were able clearly and distinctly to *comprehend* the nature of this thing; but, whether it were really *reveal'd* to them, under the notion of such things whereof they had clear and distinct Idea's. If it were divinely reveal'd, and they had sufficient testimonies for the reality and existence of it, then they wou'd have sufficient reason to believe it, without any clear and distinct Idea of the thing it self.

So that we take a *wrong method* against all the *Opposers* of *Revelation* and *Mysteries*, when we go about to explain to them what is really inexplicable by us now; many such *prophane* and *impious* Books as these have been the consequence of it. We are neither able to apprehend any thing of these Mysteries; nor if we knew them, cou'd we explain them so as to make other People understand us. 'Tis the greatest *Folly*, because it is *impossible*; and the greatest *Boldness*, because it is searching into what is hidden from us; and all these *elaborate Intricacies* are but mischievous triflings. And when Men talk so much of what they have *no Idea* of, it must always end in darkness and confusion. That part of a Christian Mystery



stery which is *intelligible* and *plain*, was ever so; and that part which is *mysterious*, notwithstanding all their vain endeavours, will ever be so till we come to another World.

Therefore our way to deal with these Men is, to fix the right *sense* and *meaning* of those Propositions, wherein the Mysteries of the Gospel are reveal'd to us; and then to insist upon the *Proofs* we have for the truth of the Revelation, and shew that they are such as ought to convince any reasonable unprejudic'd Man; insomuch that if they do not give their assent to them, they shall be *without excuse* when they come to be try'd for their Infidelity. Thus we shou'd turn the *course* of our Thoughts into a right Chancel, and confound all the Enemies of our excellent Religion. For by freely owning (as becomes us) that we have no notion at all of these mysterious things as they are in themselves, we cut off a multitude of *frivolous and impertinent Objections*. And shew these Men, that our Christian Faith however, is no *lazy credulity*, or *blind impicite assent*; since it is built upon a better Foundation than is possible for any Man to lay, without the concurrence of the *Almighty Power* of God: insomuch that we are ready to join issue with them, upon the

the Principles of Reason, in every point of our *Christian Faith*, as far as the things reveal'd fall within the compass of it.

And therefore were I to give a reason of my belief of the TRINITY, laying aside all *affectation of hard words*, and *abstruse Metaphysical Notions*, I wou'd do it thus.

I am fully perswaded of the necessity of *Revelation in general*, in order to all the purposes of *Vertue and Piety* in this life ; and I am convinc'd that those Revelations of the things of another World, which are made in the *Gospel*, have better proofs of their *Divinity* than any other whatsoever. They have such *testimonies* of their coming from God, from Prophecies, and Miracles, and the agreeableness of the Doctrines therein contain'd, to our common Notions, that if I use my *Reason* with the same *impartiality* in these that I do in other things, I must give my assent to them.

In those writings I find this Proposition,

*There*

1 Joh. 5. 7. *There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are one\**,

\* Though we grant this Text was not quoted by the *Nicene Council* against the *Arrians*, and is not found in many ancient Copies. Nay tho' we shou'd grant that it was not originally in the Epistle of *St. John*, it is however a good Argument for the Doctrine of the *Trinity*. For,

If it was a *Marginal Note*, and so crept into the *Text*, this however shews it to have been the Opinion of the most Ancient and Primitive Christians, who put his Comment to the Text.

If they say this was put in by the *Orthodox*, it was done in opposition to *Hereticks*, and this was a sufficient evidence of their firm belief of the Doctrine of the *Trinity* then.

But if this Text was expung'd by the *Arrians*, who, as *St. Ambrose* observes of them, were remarkable for this sort of fraudulent dealing with the Scriptures, then there was a great deal of reason for restoring of it.

Though it be not in some Copies, yet it is in others, and those very ancient. And that which may give us a strong presumption that it is genuine, is that it was quoted by *St. Cyprian* a considerable time before the *Nicene Council*: and before the *Arrian Heresy* ran so high, or that it was so much for the interest of any party either to insert or expunge it.

But however this be, we are sure the Scriptures with it are all of a piece, and very consistent with themselves. For the substance of this Text is plainly express'd in other places, which they don't deny to be genuine. And we make no question but if it were in the power of our modern *Hereticks* of the same rank, these too wou'd be left out of all those Copies, which shou'd be transmitted to posterity.

From



From whence, and from many other passages in the Scriptures, I find that there is a *Distinction* made in the Godhead, under these three names of *Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, which the Church hath exprest, altogether by the word *Trinity*, and singly by the word *Person*. And I think these terms proper enough, to express all that we know of this *Mystery*.

Now I find no account of this *Manner* and *Nature* of this *Distinction* in the holy Scriptures, any otherwise than that the Son was begotten, and that the Holy Ghost comes from the Father and the Son. I conclude there is something more than a meer *Nominal Distinction*, because we are said to be Baptized in the name of the *Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost*. Which must needs import something more than if that Commission had run thus. *Go baptize all Nations in the Name of Jehovah, and of Elohim, and of Adonai*. And if there were not something more intended, than barely that they should do it in the name of God, this were a needless Tautology.

Again, I conclude that they are not three *distinct different Spirits*; for then there must be *three Gods*, contrary to  
*Reason*

*Reason* and *Scripture*. From all which I infer, there is in the Godhead something more than a *meer nominal Distinction*, and something less than that of three *different Spirits*. And because I find each Person *separately* as well as *jointly* mention'd as God, and Divine Worship allow'd and paid to them. Therefore as that excellent Creed expresseth it, *I worship the Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Substance.*

Athan.

Now at the same time I make this profession of my Faith, I allow I have not the least knowledge how strict this Union is, nor how great the Distinction. It is as much beyond my Reason, as the Glory of God is beyond my Sight; and any Man who strives to conceive it himself, or takes pains to explain it to others, is guilty of such a folly, that I can't think of any action in nature extravagant enough to match it. If we saw a Man stretching up his hand with a great deal of Vebemence to pull down a Star, we shou'd certainly couclude him distracted; because 'tis utterly impossible for him to reach it, or grasp it if he cou'd. 'Tis the very case of those Men, who go about to account for the manner of that Unity, and Distinction for which they have neither Words nor Idea's. And

And therefore I fay it again, in oppo-  
 fition to this Insolent Man, that I thus  
*adore what I cannot comprehend.* This is  
 one of thofe *Myfteries* reveal'd in the Go-  
 fpel, and it is never the lefs a Myftery  
 for any thing he hath yet faid, or ever  
 will fay ; for the Union is inexplicable,  
 and will be fo to the end of the World.  
 However my affent to this is not *precari-*  
*ous* and *implicite*, or any *eafie blind Creden-*  
*lity* ; but is founded upon *clear and diftinct*  
*Idea's.* For there are three things to be  
 done by every reasonable thinking Man,  
 concerning any Proposition wherein a  
*Myftery* is reveal'd.

1. *To be fure that he understands well the  
 meaning of the Words.*
2. *That he discern no Contradiction in  
 them.*
3. *That he hath fufficient evidence of the  
 Revelation coming from God.*

1. As to the firft of thefe, in refpect of  
 the Myftery I am now upon, I under-  
 ftand very well the *meaning of the Words*  
 wherein it is reveal'd ; and they them-  
 felves who oppofe this Doctrine under-  
 ftand them as well as I ; for if they did  
 not



not know what was meant by the *Words*, they wou'd never set themselves to argue against it ; for there is no other way of confuting *Nonsense*, but saying it is such. So that thus far, if it prove to be true, these Propositions wherein the *Trinity* is reveal'd, will hold good against them at the day of Judgment, and render them without *Excuse*.

2. As to the second thing, I see no *Contradiction* in it ; and if there were, I would utterly reject it. For to say that *Three* are *One*, is so far from being a contradiction, that there is nothing more common in ordinary discourse, than for any one to say, that *Three* or any other greater number of things, are but one ; and if every Man who spoke such *seeming* contradiction, were *catch'd* up immediately, and forc'd to explain himself upon all such occasions, it wou'd make *conversation* very troublesome. As if one shou'd say, that *there are three distinct things in a Man*, a *Body*, the *Animal Spirits*, and an *Immaterial Substance*, and yet these *Three* are but *One* ; and he shou'd be forc'd to explain himself and say, that his *meaning* is not, that *Three Men* are *One Man*, or that *One Man* is *Three Men*. They who cry there is a *Contradiction* in this *Mystery*, seem to me neither to know what a  
Con-

Contradiction is, nor what is the Christian Faith concerning the Trinity. For we don't believe that the *Divinity* is *One* and *Three* in the same sense; then indeed it wou'd be a contradiction. But we affirm the quite contrary, *viz.* that the Godhead is *One* and *Three* in *different respects*. So that all this noise of *Contradiction* vanishes, and the whole force of the *Objection* amounts to no more than this, *viz.* That we are not able to conceive, in what *respect* he is *one*, and in what *respect* he is *three*; and therefore because we have no clear and distinct *Idea* of this, we must utterly reject it. I grant we are not able to *account* for this, and it is this that makes it a *Mystery*, and if I cou'd clearly solve the manner of this *Union* and *Distinction*, it wou'd cease to be such. Thus much of it is purely the *Object* of my *Faith*, and the *Authority* of God is the only ground of my assent to this part of it. But then,

3. I have sufficient proof of this *Revelation's* coming from God. I have for *This*, all the proof that I have for the *Truth* of the *Scriptures*, and the *Divine Mission* of the *Persons* who wrote them; so that I must either *reject* all *reveald Religion*, or allow *This* to be an *Article* of my *Faith*,

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But

But perhaps this Man will object, that though he shou'd grant it to be an *Article of Faith*, yet it is so no farther than we can *comprehend* it. But I have already made it out at the beginning, that both what we do, and what we cannot know, are both in gross call'd the same *Mystery*; and that my assent to what I do *not apprehend*, is founded upon the *Authority* of God, but my assent to what I do apprehend is founded upon *Evidence*: The first assent is properly Faith, the last is Knowledge.

And so likewise if I were to give an account of my belief of the *DIVINITY OF THE SON*, it shou'd be thus.

I am convinc'd by the *Completion* of Prophecies, the *Miracles* he wrought, and the agreeableness of his *Doctrine* to the natural sentiments of our Minds, that whatever *Jesus Christ* was, He came from God. I find him in many places assuming to himself the *Name*, and *Titles*, and *Worship* of God. In discoursing with the *Jews*, he useth this form of Speech *Before Abraham was, I AM*, on purpose to signify to them, that he was that very *Divine Being* which was reveal'd to *Moses*  
un-



under that *Name*. And some time after he tells them, that as he was the Son of God, so *He and the Father were one*. That the *Jews* understood him in *this sense*, I am sure, because they took up Stones at each of these Sayings, to stone him as a *Blasphemer*, because *he made himself equal with God*. If these Expressions were not to be understood in the *sense* they took them, he wou'd certainly have *undeceiv'd* them, and have made it known, that he was not God in the *sense* they understood him; but, that he was only a God by *Deputation*, according to the wild Notion of the *Socinians*. But he spoke the *Truth*, and the *Jews* understood him *right*, That *he was eternal God equal with the Father*, the very same God who was signify'd by that sacred Name *I AM*. And he hath never undeceiv'd either *them* or *us* to this day; but instead thereof, hath us'd many Expressions to *countenance* and *encourage* this Notion of him; and therefore if I act like a reasonable Man, I am under a necessity either of *giving my assent to this*, or of *utterly rejecting him as an Impostor*.

Now had he been an Impostor, God, who shew'd himself always very *jealous* of his *Honour*, wou'd never have confirm'd this Doctrine of his with such repeated *Testimonies*. If we suppose him to be on-

ly a *Messenger* come from God, and a *meer Man* who spoke only by his *Spirit* and *Commission*, he wou'd never have us'd such Expressions as must naturally be *misunderstood*, and lead thousands into the gross Sin of *Idolatry*, which of all others is the most detestable to God. *Moses* was never suffer'd to enter into the Land of *Canaan*, for a much *less suspicious* Expression, and in the heat of *passion* too; *Must we bring Water out of the Rock?* Which was a *vain-glorious Insinuation*, that they wrought that Miracle by their own immediate Power, and proper Efficacy. This comes much short of these Expressions of our Saviour's, *Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it again. I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it up. And before Abraham was I am.* And indeed that Passage concerning *Moses*, seems to have been upon Record by the special Providence of God for this very purpose, that it might be a good argument of Conviction to the *Jews*, of the Divinity of the Son, since this inference was very natural and obvious from it, *viz.*

If God was so incens'd with *Moses* for making use of one Expression, which seem'd to encroach upon his Prerogative; then how far wou'd he have been from giving Testimony of  
much

much more frequent and greater Miracles, to a Person who by many plainer Expressions, assum'd to himself the full power and perfection of the Godhead; if he were not really what he gave himself out to be.

For this reason I say, because I can't reject him as an Impostor, therefore I believe this Proposition, and confess, the blessed Jesus the Son of God to be Eternal God equal with the Father.

Now thus far I proceed in this *Mystery* upon the strictest Rules of Reason and Evidence, and my Faith of this Proposition is founded upon clear and distinct Ideas; for I know clearly who I mean by Jesus Christ, (i. e.) that Person who was born of the Virgin Mary, and crucified under Pontius Pilate; I have a clear and distinct Idea of what it is for one thing to be equal to another; and I apprehend very well what is signify'd by the Name of God here, (i. e.) that Divine Being whose necessary Existence I infer from that clear Knowledge I have of his Creatures; and of whose Nature, though I have not the least Notion as it is in it self, yet I form the best Idea of him I can by enlarging all the Perfections that are discernable in the Creatures. And I have a clear and distinct Idea, of what it is



for one Person to be the Son of another. Thus I understand the *meaning of the words*; nor is there any thing in them *contradictory* to my Reason. And lastly, I have clear and distinct Idea's of those *miraculous Proofs* to the Senses of Men; and of those *Completions of Prophecies*; and the *Excellency* of that *Doctrine* they confirm, the *Agreeableness* of it to the common *Notions* of Men, and its natural *Tendency* to make Men *easy* and *pleasant*, and *useful* to one another. All which raise such an *Evidence or Knowledge* in my mind of the *Divinity* of his *Mission* who reveal'd this *Proposition* to me, that I must do *violence* to my Reason, if I do not give my *Assent* to it. And thus far it is not so properly and strictly a *Mystery*.

But when I think of this *Proposition* again, *Jesus the Son of God, is God equal with the Father*; I must own, at the same time I give my *Assent* to it, I have no *knowledge* at all of that *Eternal Generation* which I form an *improper Idea* of from the *Procreation of one Man from another*. Nor have I any *Notion* of this wonderful *Union* of the *Humane Nature* with the *Divinity*. Nor can I in the least *imagine* wherein this *Equality* consists. These and all other things relating to the

the manner of it, are wholly out of the reach of all my *Capacities*, and totally obscur'd from me. These are the things which make it a *Mystery*, and in respect of this part of it, the *Authority* or *Veracity* of God, is the only ground of my *Perswasion*; and my Christian Faith of this Article consists in thus giving my Assent to the *Existence* of things which I have no notion of, when he hath taken care to give me undoubted Testimonies of the Revelation's coming from him. And I trust he will accept of it, because 'tis no *rash inconsiderate Assent*, but that I use those powers of Knowledge I have, as *strictly* and *impartially* in this, as I wou'd do in any Affair which immediately concern'd my Life.

And thus, I hope, it plainly appears how little reason these People have to talk to us of a *blind implicate Assent*, or *easy Credulity*, since in our *Christian Faith* we proceed upon the strictest Rules of *Reason*, and build our Assent upon no Foundation but what we know to be *firm*.

And now before I proceed to the other part of his Book, I shall repeat in short the Principles he lays down for himself to go upon in this, and the following Books which he threatens the World with.

The whole Sum of his Logick, in short then, is this:

1. *Evidence is the only ground of Perswasion, ( i. e. ) you can never give your Assent even to the reality or existence of any thing, but when you know as much of it as you do of any thing in the World; and comprehend it as fully and perfectly as that two and three make five: which is plainly to say, You can never believe any thing, but when it is so clearly known to you, that you can't help believing it. For no Man can hinder his Assent to a thing he knows perfectly well: as, no Man can help believing that two and two make four. A thing may be very true indeed, and you not believe it; but if this Truth be evident to you, your Assent must necessarily follow. So that you can believe nothing, but when you can't help it; and when you can't avoid it, then you must believe it; for God hath taken it out of our power to dissent from an evident Proposition.*

P. 22.

P. 23. *And our kind Disposer hath put us under a Law, of bowing before the Light and Majesty of Evidence; and therefore this Man must make such an Idol of it, as totally to exclude all Difference, or assent to the Word of the true God. For another Principle of his is,*

2. *That*



2. *That Authority is only a means of Information; (i. e.)* you can believe neither God nor Man upon their *Word*; for they can only relate a thing to you, but neither of them can influence your Mind to an Assent. So that to speak *plainly*, 'tis all one, in respect of your Assent, whether God, or Man, or the Devil, tells you a thing; for though you are convinced that God *always tells truth*, and the Devil is a *Liar*; yet still you believe the thing never the more, because it comes from God. Alas! the *Veracity* of God is not to be regarded in the case; no, you must bow before the *Light and Majesty of Evidence* only.

But suppose God and the Devil speak two contrary Propositions, as in the case of Eve: *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely Die: And, Thou shalt not surely Die.* The words of these two Propositions were *equally clear* to her; she understood the *substance* of them alike; and her *Idea's* of the things spoke of were *equally clear and distinct*. What then was the ground of her Assent to the latter? It could not be *Evidence*; for according to him, both these Propositions had equal pretence to her \* Assent upon this score:

\* It may be thought that I have taken a wrong Instance, because at first sight it looks as if it was the

and therefore nothing remains to be the ground of her Assent, but the Authority either of *God* or of the *Devil*. And find, by sad experience, it was the Authority of the latter that sway'd her.

But 'tis plain, she had a greater degree of Evidence or Knowledge of the Truth of the former Proposition, because she knew it came from God who cou'd not lie: and yet we find she rebell'd against this evidence. Whereas had she been under such a necessity of *bowing before the light and Majesty of Evidence*, she wou'd not in all likelihood have transgress'd as she did; and then he had not now been falling down thus prostrate to *Ignorance and Error*.

That which shews the *ridiculousness* of these two Principles, is, that upon them we can never believe any thing that is to come, though it were the *next*

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the consent only of her Will, without any delusion of her Understanding. But on second thoughts you will find, this is no other than to disbelieve the Truth of the *History*, which records this false Perswasion of her Understanding as the temptation which prevail'd upon her; for the consent of her Will did not follow, till the Devil had remov'd her Objection from that Saying of God's, *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*

*hour.*

*hour.* For though we understand the meaning of the Words, and that the *Prophecy* be concerning any of the most familiar Objects of Sense and Reason, so that you have the clearest Knowledge of the thing foretold: yet unless you will allow *Authority to be a ground of Perswasion*, you can never believe the truth of the Relation; for no Man can have any knowledge or Evidence of this till the thing comes to pass. So that as to the truth of the Relation, there is nothing left to be the ground of assent, but the *Veracity* or *Authority* of some Person or another. And thus he utterly destroys the Faith of all *Prophecies*; for though they may be true, yet we can never believe them so, till the relation is *evident* to us; and this can never be evident to us, till the things actually *come to pass*. So that this is a short way of destroying the *credit* of every thing in the Gospel, which for the most part speaks of things to come.

I said before, that in Divine Propositions *Evidence* was a ground of Perswasion in respect of the *Relation it self, or act of Revelation*; and here I say that in respect of the very same, *Authority* is a ground of Perswasion. They are both true; and therefore to make this whole Discourse more clear, and prevent all mistakes



mistakes as far as I am able, I shall once for all, shew the difference between *Divine* and *Humane Revelations* in respect of those three things, which I said were to be consider'd in every Revelation.

1. *As to the meaning of the Words*, *Divine* and *Humane Revelations* are upon equal terms. They must be both intelligible alike, and thus far Evidence or Knowledge is the only ground of Perswasion in each of them.

2. *As to the substance of the thing reveal'd*. In many cases they doth agree in this too, *viz.* That they are *equally intelligible*; for some of the Revelations of God, are concerning things as knowable by us, as the ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature. But in respect of a reveal'd Mystery, *Divine* and *Humane Revelations* are directly opposite; for the Substance of the thing intended by the revelation, in one must be always intelligible, but in the other it is totally obscur'd. But.

3. *As to the truth of the Relation it self*, or the *very act of Revelation*, there is this difference; that in all *Humane Revelations* Authority is the only ground of Perswasion; because no meer Man can give any proof, which shall amount to more than

than a probability or strong presumption. But in *Divine propositions*, the truth of the *Relation* is founded both upon Evidence and Authority. 1. Upon *Evidence*, as the truth of it is confirmed by Testimonies which are certain and infallible, as Prophecy, or Miracles, &c. which can come from none but God, and therefore create a degree of Knowledge beyond what is possible to be had of any relation meerly Humane. 2dly. Upon *Authority*, as this Knowledge is not directly of the thing it self, and therefore that we do not know the truth of it by any *direct* or *immediate intuition*. So that these Testimonies are only to convince us that the Revelation comes from God, and then we give our assent to the truth of them purely upon the account of his Veracity. A third Principle of his is, That,

3. *Divine and Humane Revelations differ not as to Perspicuity.* (i. e.) You must understand the meaning of the Words in p. 42. Divine Propositions as well as Humane; for as for *unintelligible Relations*, we can no more believe them from the Revelation of God, than from that of Man. A very subtil piece of Logick indeed, if he had design'd no more than he spoke. But he hath a farther drift in it; he knew it was

was not every Reader wou'd distinguish between *the Sense and Meaning of the Proposition*, which we grant must be equally clear and perspicuous in both, in order to an assent ; and, *The reality and existence of the thing, and truth of the Revelation*, in respect of which, the Revelations of God always carry a greater degree of *Perspicuity* ; because of that Evidence in the Mind occasion'd by such proofs which it is impossible for Man to give. What I spoke of this before, I levell'd at his design rather than his words, as I am forc'd to do in several other instances.

But he will say perhaps, these proofs may make the Revelation more *certain*, but not more *clear*. I grant they don't explain the words of it. But 'tis plain the *Proofs* make the Revelation never the more *true or certain in it self* : But it is in respect of us they make it *more certain*. And to make a Revelation more *certain* in respect of us, is to make it more *clear* ; and that is to add a greater degree of *Perspicuity* to it.

4. *We can give our assent to nothing, but what we have clear and distinct Idea's of. (i. e.) We can believe nothing but what we have the immediate perception of*  
*Sense*



*Sense, or Demonstration for, or know by direct and immediate Intuition.*

Such stuff as this he lays down for Logic, and if you will argue with him, it must be in his own Method, and upon his own Principles ; and then to be sure he will be too hard for you. But if you put him out of his Biass, and keep him to plain undisguis'd Reason, and the receiv'd rules of Arguing, you spoil him quite.

Now by this time who so blind as not to see ? That the design of this Book is *To strike at the Root and Foundation of all reveal'd Religion.* And now I have thus brought this Man out of the Clouds, I need not spend much time in stripping him of his disguise ; for the inferences he wou'd have people make from these Principles, are so *glaring and open*, that every body may see them. If Authority be no ground of Perswasion, then we must not believe the truth of any *Revelation or Prophecy.* And if we must give our assent to nothing, but what we have clear and distinct Idea's of, then farewell all Religion both *natural and reveal'd.* For we know all Religion *natural and reveal'd* is founded upon the *belief of a Deity, of the Immortality of the Soul, and of Rewards and Punishments in another World ;* but it is

is impossible for us now to have as clear and distinct Idea's of these, as we have of a *Stock* or a *Stone*; but we infer these truths only from those things whereof we have clear and distinct Idea's; and therefore upon his Principles we must utterly reject them all.

And then since by clear and distinct Idea's he means, As *exact and clear notion as we have even of sensible Objects*, in one sentence he excludes all assent even to the *reality and existence* of every thing in the Gospel that respects another World; and rejects all those *Methods* of our Salvation, which are spoke of in the Bible, as so many *Dreams and Fictions*. Thus we must disbelieve the *Resurrection and Change* of our Bodies; the *Happiness* of the blest in Heaven; the *Incarnation and Divinity* of the Son; the *Trinity of Persons* in the Godhead; the *Operations of the Holy Ghost*, &c. nay, the *whole Christian Religion*: Because, as I have sufficiently shewn, we have not such clear and distinct Idea's of these things, as we have of the ordinary *Phænomena* of nature.

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He cou'd not but see this, and therefore we may well conclude this was his drift. But he did not consider at the same time, that this wou'd cut off all assent to the very *Being of God*. And though I am fully convinc'd, that he is the most inveterate *Enemy* to reveal'd Religion, that hath lately appear'd in Print; however I can scarce think he is arriv'd to that height of *Atheism* yet, as to deny the existence of God, though he has not as clear and distinct an Idea of him, as he has of a Stock or a Stone.

As for his second Section. 'tis all *for* Sect. 11. *reign* to the matter; and all that he says about seeming contradictions, is plainly levell'd at the Doctrine of the *Trinity*, though *Transubstantiation* be the instance he makes use of. And he proceeds upon the same fundamental Error he hath hitherto done, That we can believe nothing but what we have a clear and distinct Idea of.

We say as well as he, *That there is no* P. 25. *thing contrary to Reason in the Gospel.* That P. 26. *there is no contradiction in any point of Doctrine in it.* That Christianity is a *Rational and Intelligible Religion*, which are the things he insists upon in this Section, and goes



goes a great way about to prove very awkwardly. And therefore what can he mean by it, unless it be to make *unthinking* People fancy we deny all this. If he hath any thing to object against our Doctrine of the Church of *England* or *Ireland*, let him speak plainly : but nothing is more vile and disingenuous, than for a Man to speak thus indistinctly and confusedly, and talk all in the *general* with design to make People think us guilty of those *errors* we detest and abhor. If he has any controverse with us, let him deal honestly, and instance in any one point of Doctrine we believe or teach, that is contrary to *Reason* or *Scripture* ; and make it out as plainly, as I have done his Principles to be such. If not, let him own he had no other design but to expose the *Christian Religion*, and its *Teachers* ; and gratifie the *Rancour* of a sort of People, who because of their lewd and debauch'd lives, must naturally hate that Institution, which they shall one day be condemn'd by ; and which promises them nothing but *Damnation* in another World.

This Book which goes under his name, is exactly calculated for them ; there is a little superficial shew of Learning to make it plausible, but not one instance  
in

in all the Book of close Reason or Argument. Let him shew me where one link of my *Reasoning* fails, and I will make it up again so firm, that he shall never be able to undo it. Whereas all his whole Discourse is a mere *Rope of Sand*; many bold and false Assertions, sly Insinuations, and several things, nothing at all to the question, huddled up together on purpose to patch up a Book; and amuse such persons who have just Logick enough to be impos'd upon by a Fallacy, but not to see through it.

Now after this long digression of two Sect. III. Sections, in his third and last Section he comes at length to the matter in dispute, but with what success we shall see.

Here he begins to state the question P. 66. again, and says, a *Doctrine above Reason*, or a *Mystery*, denotes one of these two things. Either,

I. *A thing intelligible in it self, but cover'd with such a Veil, that Reason cannot penetrate to see what is under it, till it be remov'd.* P. ib.

Which definition agrees perfectly to the Mysteries of the Gospel; for they are all things intelligible in themselves, but

in this life *so obscur'd from us by this Veil of flesh and blood, that with our strongest Imagination and closest Reasonings, we can't penetrate into the true nature of them, till this Veil be remov'd*; and then we shall see them clearly. Now this is not the definition that he quarrels with; and if he will admit of this little enlargement of it, we are both agreed. But the definition he finds fault with, is this.

- P. 66. 2. A Mystery is a thing of its own nature unconceivable, and not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's, though it be never so clearly reveal'd.

I never met with any one Sentence so fraught with absurdity as this is. For,

1. It signifies a thing in its own nature unconceivable, this is a down-right falsity. For every Mystery is in its own nature conceivable; the more truth any thing hath in it, the more conceivable it is in it self; the Mysteries of Christianity are the *Eternal Truths* of God, and therefore they are in themselves conceivable. But it is in respect of us that they are not so, because of the frail and limited condition of our understandings in this life.

2. Not



2. *Not to be judg'd of by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's, though it be clearly reveal'd.* Now for a thing to be clearly reveal'd to a Man, and yet that same Man know nothing of it (which is his sense of the words, and which he would fasten upon us) is a perfect contradiction. For it is no other than saying, *that the same Man may, and may not know the same thing, at the same time.* He can never come off by saying that a thing may be clearly reveal'd, and yet the Person may have no ability to apprehend any thing of it; for all Revelation supposes a capacity in the Person to whom it is made, to apprehend something of it: and therefore 'tis nonsense to say, *that any thing can be clearly reveal'd to a Horse, or a Stock, or a Stone.*

3. Besides it is absolutely false, *that the Mysteries of our Religion are not to be judg'd of, by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's.* It hath already appear'd that as to the thing signified and intended in the Revelation, we have no Idea, nor faculty to judge of it as it is in it self. But as to all those means, whereby God hath discover'd the reality and existence of those things to us, we may judge of them all by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's. And

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to make this plain, let us instance in the same Mystery of the Resurrection.

*Our Bodies sown in Corruption, shall be rais'd in Incorruption.*

This is one of the reveal'd Mysteries of the Gospel, and yet we are to judge of it by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's. For we have Idea's in our heads of what a *body is*; what it is to be *sown or laid in the ground*; what it is to be *rais'd*; and what it is for a *body to be improv'd when it is so*. Besides, our Faculties of Understanding are imploy'd in considering those *many arguments* which prove the truth of this Mystery; and therefore 'tis plain that by our Faculties and Idea's, we can judge of that part of it which is knowable by us. But he will say, we can't judge of that part of it which is totally obscur'd from us, and therefore so far it is no *part of our Faith*, and we are wholly unconcern'd in it. But on the contrary, we are bound by express words of Scripture, to believe that this Improvement will be very great, as in 1 John 3. 2. *We know not yet what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him*. Here we are bound to believe that we shall be like Christ tho' we

we know not what this likeness is, or wherein it will consist.

4. On this supposition, that a *thing is in its own nature unconceivable*, how is it possible for it to be reveal'd? This is another flat *Contradiction ex Parte Rei*, as the first was *ex Parte Hominis*. A thing is in its own nature unconceivable, and yet it may be reveal'd (*i. e.*) *the same thing may, and may not be reveal'd.*

5. He makes a thing's being *in its own nature unconceivable*, and *not to be perceiv'd by our ordinary Faculties and Idea's*, to signify the same thing; whereas they are just as different as Light and Darknes. Though our capacities are now dark and shallow, yet they will hereafter be improv'd and enlarg'd; and then we shall have extraordinary Idea's to represent to us what we have no notion of now; And then the thing will be no way *unconceivable* either in it self, or in respect of us.

These are not all the absurdities in this sentence; and yet it is the very *Monster* this *Knight-errant* sets up for himself to engage with. It is the spurious off-spring of his own brain, and yet he fathers it upon us, by introducing it



with this expression, *It is made to signifie,* &c. But it was never *made* to signifie this by any besides himself. I shou'd have read the Gospel a million of times over before this definition of a Mystery wou'd have come into my head. Here he hath made his own words good ; *That Contradiction and Mystery are two emphatical ways of saying nothing* ; He lays down this absurd definition of a Mystery, and then sets himself with a great deal of Solemnity to encounter it, which is in truth no other than for a Man to put himself into a ridiculous *antick posture*, and then quarrel with his shadow for it.

It is hard to tell how to proceed with this Man, he has been running away from the *Question* ever since he began ; and now that he put us in hopes of coming to it again, you see how grossly we are disappointed. I wou'd with all my heart stick by the first definition of a Mystery which with a little addition I allow to be very good.

*A Christian Mystery is a Divine Truth intelligible of it self, but so cover'd and obscur'd from us now in this life, that Reason can't penetrate the Veil to see what is under it, till this Veil be remov'd in another life by the glorification of our Bodies. Let him*

him confute this definition if he can, for I will never fall out with him about the other; he shall have it all to himself; 'tis his own *Creature*, let him be as severe upon it as he pleases. But because he has so blindly mistook the matter, I must tell him once more what it is he is to prove, if he has any controversie with us in this point. He is to prove these two things.

1. *That there is nothing reveal'd to us in the Gospel but what we have clear and distinct Idea's of, (i. e.) either a full comprehensive knowledge of, or as clear and distinct notions as we have of any ordinary Object in nature, And,*

2. *That we are not obliged by Scripture, to believe that there is any thing intended in some points reveal'd, beyond what we are now able thus to comprehend.*

These are the things which lay upon him to prove, if he wou'd have spoke to the purpose.

It is impossible that any Man shou'd argue closely, who mistakes the Question as he does; however, I shall consider what there is in the rest of his Book that looks like reasoning. He does not  
pro-

proceed to proof yet, but runs upon another Digression, to tell us the signification of the word *Mystery*, and particularly what it signify'd among the *Gentiles*. But what is this to us? It signifies quite another thing among the *Christians*.

P. 68. But he says not; for in the *New Testament* *Mystery* is always us'd in the first sense of the word, or that of the *Gentiles*, viz.

P. 73. For things naturally very intelligible, but so covered by figurative Words, or Rites, that Reason could not discover them without special Revelation. This is the description which he gives both of the *Gentile* and *Christian* Mysteries in common.

But taking a *Christian* Mystery even in his own sense, (i. e.) As it was involv'd in *Jewish* Types and Ceremonies; yet they differ very much from those Mysteries of the *Gentiles*. For,

1. The *Christian* Mysteries were not discoverable but by the special Revelation of God, whereas those of the *Gentiles* were discoverable by the Revelation of a Man.

2. Besides, 'tis absolutely false that the things involv'd in the *Jewish* Types were in their own Nature very intelligible. For they



they were all of such a Nature, that Men cou'd never have arriv'd to the least degree of knowledge concerning them by strength of Reason; whereas there was nothing in the Heathen Mysteries but what was in it self very obvious to Reason.

3. The matters contain'd in the Jewish Mysteries and the things intended by them, were such as concern'd the *Eternal salvation of Mens Souls*, whereas the things contain'd in those of the Heathen were to a quite contrary purpose, in order to *Idolatry*, and many other gross sins. And it is not without very good reason I take notice of this difference here; for though it doth not hit this description of his immediately, because he may perhaps say, *those were thought to be the concernment of Souls too*: yet it is levell'd at the main design of his Books, which by this time no Man can be ignorant of.

4. The things contain'd in the Jewish Mysteries, the *Priests themselves were ignorant of*; whereas the Heathen Priests for the most part *knew the bottom of theirs*, and conceal'd them industriously from the People. And this is what he wou'd insinuate of all Christian Priests, *viz.*  
That

- That we fully comprehend the meaning of all these things our selves, and palm them upon the People for Mysteries. Which is the occasion of those virulent expressions of his in this Chapter, *That through Ignorance or Passion we maintain, what was introduc'd by the craft or superstition of our fore-fathers.* And calls it a *Gainful Opinion*; as if the only design of Christian Mysteries, were to bring in Money to the Priests. He calls Christianity as it is now receiv'd an *Implicite Constitution*; and says *the Venerable Teachers play at this small game to amuse the People.* But he, like a sharp inquisitive Man it seems, has found out our Mysteries, and is resolv'd in his next Book to discover them all, and lay us open to the World, like *Heathen Priests as he makes us.*
- P. 72.
- P. 73.
- P. ib.
- P. 74.

- And now I come to his *second Chapter* of the *third Section*, where there is the first appearance of any thing like a reason; there is but one argument in all that *Chapter*, and indeed in all the *Book*; and because he delivers it confus'dly, I will reduce it to form, and then we shall see clearly what *force* there is in it. And if he thinks I don't do him justice, let him manage it better for himself if he can. The whole strength of his arguing is this.
- P. ib.

*If we have as clear and distinct Idea's of every thing reveal'd in the Gospel, as we have of any thing in Nature, then there are no Mysteries in it.*

*But we have as clear and distinct Idea's of every thing reveal'd in the Gospel, as we have of any thing in Nature : Therefore,*

*There are no Mysteries in the Gospel.*

The Minor he proves thus :

*If we have as clear and distinct Idea's of God and Eternity, as we have of any thing in nature, then we have as clear and distinct Idea's of every thing revealed in the Gospel, as we have of any thing in Nature.* P. 86.

*But we have as clear and distinct Idea's of God and Eternity, as we have of any thing in Nature. Ergo.*

Now do but deny this Minor, and he puts you off to another Book for the proof of it, and this is the whole substance of his reasoning here. But to pass by the Impiety and Prophaneness of that Saying of his, *That the Divine Being it self is not more Mysterious than the most contemptible of his Creatures,* I will give him a reason why



why it is impossible for him ever to prove what he pretends. And that is, because even the most glorious of his Creatures are *finite and limited*; whereas the nature of God is *Infinite*; and therefore even when we come to Heaven, he will be *mysterious* to us in a more proper sense than any thing else, because we shall not even then have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of him, as we shall have of *the greatest* of his Creatures.

P. 75.

That which he builds upon, is this, *That nothing can be said to be a Mystery, because we have not an adequate Idea of it, and a distinct view of all its properties at once.* But who ever said that the Mysteries of the Gospel were such only for this reason? I grant him if this were all, then as he says, *every thing in nature wou'd be a mystery*, for we have not a full and perfect knowledge of any thing. The true reason why our Christian Mysteries are such in a more peculiar and proper sense, is, because the Idea's we have of them are more imperfect and less adequate, than those we have of the ordinary *Phænomena* of Nature. This is the point in difference between us, *Whether we have as perfect and comprehensive a knowledge of every thing reveal'd in the Gospel, as we have*  
of

of *any thing in Nature*. This is what he affirms, and we deny; and for proof, as I said before, he refers us to another Book in reversion. Here he only affirms it boldly, and instead of proving *that our notions of these divine things are as exact and full, as the Notions we have even of sensible Objects*; he spends this whole Chapter in proving by several instances; as, of the Table he writes upon; of Rain, and a drop of Water, &c. that we have not an adequate Idea of any thing. But why does he thus beat the Air? who ever deny'd it? and yet this poor *hungry* thought, is the only appearance of an Argument through his Book; it was for this only the whole was wrote, and the only skill he has shewn in it, is in beating up so little *Sense*, into all this *Froth*,

Now because there is no Proof here, there can be no farther Answer: However, since he hath order'd the matter so as to make it look like Reasoning, to amuse the Minds of unthinking People, I shall shew the difference between the things reveal'd to us in the Gospel, and the usual *Phænomena* of nature with respect to the measures of our knowledge. And therefore,

1. Though

1. Though we shou'd grant what is absolutely false and what he was to have given some proof for; if he had been able, *that the things reveal'd in the Gospel, and the ordinary Objects of our Senses, were upon the same level as to our Knowledge, that we are equally ignorant of both, and comprehend them alike; yet his Inference wou'd not follow from hence, viz. That the things reveal'd in the Gospel are not Mysteries, in a more proper sense than a Spire of Grass, a Stock or Stone.* For though we are equally ignorant of two things, yet there may be much more behind to be known in one than in the other; and therefore upon this score, may much more properly be call'd a Mystery. For certainly though we knew as much of God now as we do of a Stock or Stone, yet sure he will allow there is infinitely more yet to be known in that Fountain of all Perfection, that rich Treasure of Wisdom, which is so far from being comprehended now, that he shall never be exhausted to all eternity.

We may say the same of all the other Mysteries of Christianity, though we shou'd grant our Idea's of them were



were as perfect, and that we knew as much of them now as we do of any thing in nature, yet because they are *infinitely more excellent* in themselves; and that there is much more behind to be known in them, yet they wou'd deserve the name of *Mysteries* in a much more proper sense than any thing in nature. Especially if we add that they are not only more *excellent* in themselves, but they are of much greater *concernment* to us, as they relate to *the salvation of our Souls*, and our well-being for ever in another World: Which makes them deserve more regard, and consequently a *better name* if we have it to give them.

Wherefore we may well wonder what end any Man cou'd have in starting such a *notion* as this is, unless it were to vilifie and debase the *Doctrines* of the Gospel; and cunningly to lessen all *reveal'd Religion*, and its *Teachers* in the opinion of Men, as if they already had too great thoughts of God and his *Revelations*.

2. But there is a yet greater *difference* than this; for the things reveal'd in the Gospel, as to that part of them which makes them *Mysterious*, are such as exceed our present *Capacities* of Knowledge;

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where-

whereas all the things of Nature fall within their *Sphere*, and are in themselves immediate and proper objects of our Sense and Reason. Though many of them are such that we neither do, nor ever can actually know any thing of them. And to lay this difference open to all, we must consider that this of *being above Reason* is an æquivocal expression, and signifies two very different things.

I. It signifies a thing which does not exceed our powers of understanding; but is conceal'd from us, and lies out of our reach, by some accidental impediment or obstruction, which it is impossible for us to remove. And in this Sense it is above our Reason to know certainly, *what is at the center of the Earth; or whether there be any Inhabitants in Saturn, or of what species they are; what are the true motions of the Heavenly Bodies, and what order they observe among themselves; and the different configuration of the little parts of matter, &c.* That which makes these things above our Reason, is not any thing essential to them, but something accidental. And therefore we find our knowledge very much improv'd, and promoted by the help of Glasses, which discover things that by reason of their smallness, and distance, were not perceived.

ceptible by the naked eye, nor certainly discoverable by Reason. So that we may say, many things were above our Reason before these helps were found out, which are not so now; and if these helps could be carried on and improved to that degree, as to lay open to our view the smallest parts of matter, and at the greatest distance: or that a rational account were given us of all the *Phænomena* in Nature, by any intelligent Being superiour to ours, we should apprehend it distinctly and perfectly, and then nothing in nature would be above our Reason.

2. To be above our Reason signifies, *A thing which in its own nature exceeds our present Capacities, and is no proper object of those faculties of knowledge which we are now endued withal.* And in this Sense the nature of God is more properly above our Reason than a *Stock* or a *Stone*; *Eternity* than *Time*; a *Spirit*, than a *Body*; the *Joy*s of Heaven; than *Sensual Pleasures*; the eternal *Generation* of the Son, than the ordinary *Procreation* of Man; the *operations* of the Holy Spirit, than the *nourishment* of our Bodies, &c. There is as yet no proportion between these *Objects* and our *Faculties* of Knowledge; our intellectual Powers are not yet form'd and



so adapted for them, as they are for those things in Nature, which are the proper objects of our Sense and Reason now. So that it is a more improper way of speaking, to say *that these things should be clearly reveal'd to us now, as they are in themselves*; than to say, *that a nice point in Divinity or Philosophy, should be clearly explain'd to an Infant*. They are indeed plainly reveal'd to us as to their reality and existence, but not clearly as to the true nature of the things. Nothing in the World is more evident, than that such things are reveal'd to us; but what or how they are in themselves, is impossible for us to comprehend. And this is what the Apostle means by that Saying, that

1 Cor. 2. *Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have*  
9. *entred into the heart of man the things which God hath laid up for them that love him.* Which Words, though by the Context they are more immediately spoke of things past, and then reveal'd in part; yet they have a farther reference to the full completion of all these things in another World.

I shall make this whole matter plain by an Instance. A Person who was born blind knows as little of the *Sun* as he does of the *real nature of God*; he feels the *heat and-warmth* of it; he is *cherish'd* by it;  
and

and lives; and thrives by the secret influence of it; but he neither knows *where*, nor *what* it is: and if he had been ever told that all this was the immediate act of God, he wou'd have thought so; for he knows nothing of the Sun besides the name. Now upon this Author's Principles, the nature of the Sun, and the nature of God are both equally a Mystery to this Blind Man. That he is equally ignorant of the true nature of both, I grant; however they are not equally a Mystery to him. And that this may appear, let us suppose this Man's Eyes were opened; then he wou'd see clearly that the Sun is a *large, round, lucid Body* in the Firmament: but he wou'd be hereby enabled to know nothing more of the true nature of God than he did before. And why? because this is beyond the reach of all his natural powers of Knowledge; and if all his Senses were improv'd to be a thousand times nicer than they are, though he wou'd see much deeper into the nature of all things here, yet the *nature of God*, and the *thing related to another Life*, wou'd lie as much out of his reach as ever; he wou'd even then know as little of the Glory of God as that Man did of the Sun before his Eyes

were opened. For Light it self is but a *Metaphor*, adaped to our gross Capacities to signifie the Glory of God, which we are told in the Revelations, is to be instead of light in Heaven.

But because this is an Instance only of a sensible Object, let us take another of Reason. Let us suppose and *illiterate* Person, who never heard of *Christianity*, or the *Mathematicks*, is equally ignorant of these two Propositions.

*The three Angles of a Triangle are equal to two Right ones.* And this ;

*We shall be rais'd in the likeness of Christ.*

These two Propositions this *Derider* of all reveal'd Truths will say, are alike mysterious to this Man. Whereas the contrary will evidently appear if we but take this Man and teach him *Mathematicks*, then he shall perfectly apprehend all that is to be known of that demonstration, and how it is impossible it shou'd be otherwise. But teach him the *Gospel*, and make him as learned as he is capable in the Christian Religion, he shall know nothing more of that Proposition (though he shall be better convinc'd of the Truth of it) than he did at first hearing.



ing. And why? because the *one* was a truth in nature within the sphere of his intellectual powers; the *other* is *supernatural* and he can never have any notion of the manner of it, till he has new Faculties or those he already hath are greatly enlarg'd

But this matter will clear up farther, if we compare some of the Mysteries of our Religion with those things in Nature, which bear the greatest *Analogy* with them, and by which they are represented to us in the Scriptures.

If we say a *Son* is like his Father, we immediately conceive in our Minds the same *Stature*, *Countenance*, *Lineaments*, and *Complexion*; or the same *Humour*, *Disposition*, *natural parts* and *Inclinations*, &c. so that we very well apprehend wherein the *likeness* consists. But when we say *we shall rise in the likeness of Christ*, here we stop and our Thoughts can reach no farther.

Again, when we say one Man is the *Son* of another, we apprehend very well the manner of natural procreation, and how it is he came to be his Father. But when we say, *Christ is the Son of God by an Eternal Generation*, we know nothing

of the manner of one Spirit's producing another; nor can we tell how he came to be born of a Virgin without the concurrence of a Man.

When we say the Spirit of God hath a real influence upon ours in the *operation of Grace*, we know much less of the manner of it, than we do of one Body's moving another by contract: and we know the Food we eat nourisheth us by undergoing several alterations, and then being converted into the substance of our Bodies; but we can't know thus much of the manner how Grace administers strength and comfort to our Souls.

Again we know of *time* that it is *finite* and *successive*, and we can measure it in certain proportions by the motions of the heavenly Bodies, But as for *Eternity*, for want of a clear Idea we frame a notion of it from time; and thus by a limited thought we do little less than destroy its *Being*. For as for saying it is a *perpetual Now*, though it be the *prettiest* thought we have of it, yet if we attend to this, we shall find, we say nothing more than that the same Instant shall remain for ever: and thus attribute that succession to one Instant of time abstractedly considered, which we us'd to attribute to things

things which exist in it. And therefore it is as gross a description of Eternity, as a flying Boy is of an Angel.

And yet it is very pleasant to hear how this Man talks of it. It is no more *above* our Reason because we can't apprehend it, than a Circle is because we may. But why? because Reason goes as far as it can in both. The Circle is to be imagin'd, but Eternity is not essentially imaginable; if it were, Reason would have it as well as the Circle, yes that it would: but you would not have Reason to imagine any thing that is not to be imagined: And yet but a few lines after he will make us imagine it in his next Book as perfectly as that 3 and 2 make 5. But this is a strange Circle in arguing, to prove that *Eternity is not above our Reason, because it is.* And you see the cause of this blunder is, because he confounds *Idea* with *Imagination*, one of the best distinctions we are beholding to the modern Logicians for. 'Tis plain there are many things we have *Idea's* of, which we are not able to imagine, and Eternity is one of them. And because we can't frame any imagination of it; it doth not follow that we can't apprehend it at all, for Reason can frame an *Idea* of it as it doth of the other things of another life (*i. e.*)  
by



by *Analogy*, and for this reason it is more a Mystery than a Circle, which we perfectly imagine.

Once more, though the *Essence of matters* lies hid from us, as well as that of a Spirit, yet we know much more of its properties, as that it hath *Gravity, Extension, Solidity, Impenetrability, Divisibility*; and this *Table on which I write*, though I can't actually divide it into infinite parts, yet I can carry it on in my Mind, and conceive it divisible. Now these are *properties of matter* which agree to it in general and are not meer *modifications* of it. But we know no more of a Spirit but that it thinks (*i. e.*) just enough to prove its *Existence*, and no more; for as to all the different *Modifications* of Thought, it is but thinking still; and therefore is answerable but to that one property of *Extension* in matter.

Besides we don't attribute this of *Thinking* immediately and positively to a Spirit; for we don't say a Spirit thinks because we know so much of the real nature of it as to discover this: but we say it thinks because we can prove that matter can't.

Now

Now, when I say the Idea we have of a Spirit is not *positive*, I mean that it is not so in respect of our understanding ; because we have no way of attributing it to a Spirit, but by a *negation* of it to matter. I must confess if we take a Spirit in the sense that some Men do (*i. e.*) only for a *Thinking Being*, then indeed we come to the notion of it by *Reflection* ; we find something in us that Thinks, and from thence we immediately attribute it to that *Being*.

But for any thing that is yet concluded, this Thinking Being may be meer matter ; and when we proceed to infer the existence of an *immaterial* substance (which is the true notion of a Spirit, as it is distinguish'd from matter, and in which sense God is said to be a Spirit) then the Idea we have of it, is as far from being positive, as the words by which we express it. Then we have no other way of conceiving it, but by removing from it *Extension, Divisibility, Solidity, &c.* which are the properties of Body : and we conclude that the substance in us that thinks must be immaterial, because this operation exceeds the power of meer matter, *i. e.* while it is such ; for if God should alter all the properties of it, so as  
to

to make it *something else*, and not matter; then no one can deny but it may think; but how far this implies a contradiction I shall not now dispute.

So that again I can't but wonder any one shou'd affirm positively, that we have as clear and distinct Idea's of the *Nature* and *Properties* of Spirit, as we have of Body.

*Letter to  
the Bishop  
of Wor-  
cester,  
p. 69, 70.  
71.*

Mr *Lock's* Notion of the *Soul* is only that of a *thinking substance* without any regard either to the *materiality* or *immateriality* of it; though one wou'd think he inclines to the former, when he shews this to be the sense of the word *Spirit* both in *Prophane* and *Divine* Authors. However he says afterwards that the utmost *Proof* we can have for the immateriality of it will amount only to a *Probability* and thus much concerning it he thinks deducible from his Principles, and particularly from his supposition of a *System of matter*; and adds that he would gladly see a better proof of it either from the *Bishop of Worcester* or any one else. To speak to this now would be no other than a digression from the business I am upon; but I do not despair of giving him this *Demonstration* which he would so gladly see; and shewing him withal how



how very much he is out in his application of those Texts of Scripture he makes use of. I know 'tis easie for a person to deny any thing to be demonstration which is not *mathematically such*; but if it appears that we have as good proof for the *immateriality* of the Soul, as we can reasonably expect for any *natural* or *moral truth*, this is sufficient for the conviction of any; except those who by their Principles are oblig'd to oppose it.

But to return, it is Evident from what hath been said, that we are so far from forming any Idea of Spirit as clear and distinct as that we have of matter, that we can't form a simple Idea of any property in it, which is positive in respect of our understanding; and therefore since *simple Idea's* are the foundation of all our knowledge as they are laid down by that *Delicate and Curious Head*, which this Man of *Forehead* only has so grossly mistaken; that defect in the first principles shall run through all our after Reasonings about the real nature of it and render them much more *confus'd* and *imperfect* than those concerning matter.

I might say the same of a *Spiritual* or *Glorified Body*, that we can frame no Idea  
of

of it, but by *negation* of those imperfections that are incident to us in this frail condition of mortality, and those few passages related of our Saviour's Body after his Resurrection, are wholly unaccountable by us ; at least much more than the ordinary appearances of Nature ; as particularly his *vanishing out of their sight all of a sudden ; and appearing in the midst of them, at a time when the doors were shut, &c.* and that these things were not any miraculous operations, but the real properties of a glorify'd Body, is more likely to think ; than that he shou'd have rarify'd the *Door*, or the *Walls of the House* to get entrance ; or have secretly convey'd himself in a-long with them, as some learned Men have endeavour'd to solve these passages. Nor can we conceive how a body shou'd be divested of its gravity, so as to mount the Skies as our Saviour's did at his ascension, and as the Bodies of the Saints shall do at the general Resurrection. None of these things are to be solv'd upon the common principles of knowledge that are in us now, because we have not capacities suitable to the nature of them.

So that now we may wonder what ridiculous meaning this Man can have, when he says that all the things which  
are

are spoke of in the Gospel, are as consistent with our *common notions* as *Wood* and *Stone*; and that we are as properly said to *comprehend* them; and that our *Idea's* of *natural* and *divine* things are equally clear and distinct. A strange fallacious inference this; *because we fully comprehend neither, therefore we are equally ignorant of both.* And to amuse people that can't see this, that he might seem to speak something to the purpose, he borrows a distinction, *viz.* That between the *Nominal* and *Real Essence* of a thing. How impertinently he hath made use of it in this matter, is very plain from what has been said; which though we grant it to be a good one, yet it is nothing to the purpose. But it is so far from being a good *Distinction*, that it seems to me not to be good sense. For nothing can be more absurd than to suppose *two different Essences* in the same thing. Nor can any thing be more directly levell'd at those glorious Attributes of God, his *Goodness* and *Truth*, than what it supposes, *viz.* That we are thus deceiv'd in every thing, and know nothing at all of the true nature of things by those properties that are discernable by us. And therefore to use his own words, *This rather becomes Impostors to think, than the taught of God*  
who



*who hath no interest to delude his Creatures, nor wants ability to inform them rightly.*

If it had been said in plain language, that there is something in natural things *we do apprehend*, and something *we do not*; which is all that's meant in that distinction: This wou'd have been Philosophy for the Vulgar; and therefore to make a Mystery of it, it must be call'd the *Nominal* and *Real Essence* of a thing: though it carry a flat contradiction in *Physicks*, and a monstrous consequence in *Morality*, and lays a foundation for *Eternal Septicism*. But supposing there is a meaning in it both *true* and *innocent*, yet it must be own'd this was the most unhappy way of expressing themselves, that possibly they could have light upon.

Sect. 3. Thus far as to his arguments from  
Chap. III. *Reason*. Now I come to consider those he  
brings from *Scripture*; and we are like to  
have very close reasoning from them,  
when in the very entrance he again  
P. 90. confounds these two Propositions; *Whether*  
*or no Christianity is Mysterial*, and *whether*  
*there are no Mysteries in Christianity*.  
Whereas even the latter of them is dubious;  
for the word *Mystery* is us'd to signify  
several things. And therefore to remove  
all

all ambiguity, and shew the fallacy of his arguing we will lay aside the *Words*, and speak to the *thing it self*, (*i. e.*) *Whether we have not as clear and distinct Idea's, as full and perfect a knowledge of all things reveal'd to us in Scripture, since the appearing of Christ in the World, as we have of ordinary sensible Objects.*

That we had not before he allows, and therefore he grants they were Mysteries then, but now since the coming of Christ they are not. And the whole substance of his arguing in this long Chapter is this.

*If all those things which were signified by the Jewish Rites and Ceremonies are clearly reveal'd to us, then they are no longer hidden from us.*

*But all those things signified by the Jewish Rites and Ceremonies are clearly reveal'd to us. Therefore*

*They are no longer hidden from us.*

Thus he proves Minor.

*If the Veil is taken away in Christ, then they are clearly reveal'd to us.*

*But the Veil is taken away in Christ.*

Therefore,

*They are clearly reveal'd to us.*

And to make this Minor good, he brings all these *Texts* of Scripture, and *Quotations* out of the Fathers, to prove that the Veil is taken away, and that they are clearly reveal'd

Now if any amongst us had absolutely deny'd that the Veil was taken away, and had affirm'd that they were not plainly reveal'd to us, then he might have had an *adversary*: But there is not a sentence in this Chapter, that looks like a controversie with any but the *Jews*. If this Man wou'd have *argu'd* instead of *Bantring*, he wou'd have distinguish'd, and shewn in what sense we *deny* it, and then have prov'd that the Veil was taken away in that sense that we deny. And therefore since he hath dealt *treacherously*, I must make him *honest*, and *distinguish* for him.

And in order to make this matter very plain, we know that there are four things to be reveal'd concerning any thing that is hid from us. Its *Existence*, its *Essence*, its *Properties*, and the *Relation* it hath



to us; and every one apprehends at first reading how a thing may be clearly reveal'd as to its *Existence*, together with the relation it hath to us, and yet remain totally obscur'd as to its *Essence* and *Properties*. Now therefore what we say, is this:

1. That as to the *internal Essence*, and *real Properties* of these divine things revealed to us from Heaven, we are wholly ignorant of them; and know as little of them in this respect, now they are reveal'd in the Gospel, as was known before when they were involv'd in *Types* and *Figures*.

2. That all these things which we call *Mysteries*, and now reveal'd to us in the Gospel, while they were veil'd in *Types* and *Figures* under the *Mosaick Oeconomy*, were very much obscur'd as to their *Existence*, and to the *concernment of Mankind in them*; and therefore the Law is said to have had only a shadow of good things to come, (1. c.) Men had but a very dark and imperfect knowledge even of the *reality*, and *being*, and *signification* of those things. As of the *Eternal generation of the Son*, his *Incarnation*, *Crucifixion*, *Ascension*, the *Trinity of Persons*, *Resurrection* and *Glorification*.

of the *Body*, the *Operations* of the *Holy Spirit*, &c. They had then no clear and certain knowledge of the *reality* and *existence* of any of these things afterwards reveal'd in the Gospel, excepting only that of the *Being* of the true God, which was reveal'd to them by *Moses* under the name *I A M*, which denoted nothing more than his existence.

3. We say that these divine things, which were hidden and obscur'd before the appearing of Christ, were all of them plainly and clearly reveal'd as to their *Existence*, and as to the *Relation* they have to us; (*i. e.*) as to the reality and being of these Truths, and our Concernment in them. And yet they do not cease to be *Mysteries* still, because they are still infinitely more obscur'd as to their *Manner* and *Properties*, than the common objects of Nature. So that now it is clearly reveal'd to us, that *Christ is the Son of God*, yet it doth not follow that therefore we know as much of the manner of that *Eternal Generation* of the Son, as we do how one Man is said to be the Son of another. Because it is reveal'd to us that there are endless *Joys in Heaven*, it doth not follow that we know as much of them as we do of *sensual Pleasures*. Because it is clearly reveal'd

to

to us that we shall be raised at the last day, in the glorious *likeness* of Christ; it doth not follow that we know as well what this Glory will be, as we know what it is to be of a *Fair and Beautiful Completion*. And so in all the rest.

And this is the reason of those seemingly opposite Expressions of St. Paul, the one in 2 Cor. 3. 18. where speaking of the *Clearness* of the Gospel, in opposition to the *Obscurity* of the Law, he says, *We all with open face beholding, as in a Glass, the glory of the Lord*. And yet in 1 Cor. 13. 12. speaking of this same present state of the Gospel, in opposition to our future state in Heaven, he says, *That now we see through a Glass darkly, but then face to face*. By the first he denotes the *Clearness* of the Revelation as to the *Existence*, and *Design* of those things now under the Gospel: by the latter, he denotes the present *Obscurity* of them, as to their *Manner* and *Properties*.

But it may be objected here, that thus they are but *Types* still, and therefore the things contained in the Jewish Rites and Ceremonies, are as little reveal'd now, as they were before. But whosoever makes this Objection, can't but



know these two things to be true which I contend for, however we are able to reconcile them; *viz.* 1. *That those things signified by Jewish Rites and Ceremonies since the coming of Christ, are more clearly reveal'd to us than they were before.* And 2. *That now they are more clearly reveal'd to us, yet we have no Idea's of the real Nature or Properties of them;* which I have sufficiently proved. Whosoever allows these two things, must be of my opinion, whether I were able to answer this Objection or no. But it is easie for any one to apprehend, that when I say the *Idea's* we have of the things of another World are no other than a sort of *Types* or *Figures*, I don't take them in the strictest sense of the words, as they are applied to Jewish Rites and Ceremonies; which were all of them Actions conversant about *external Objects*, and design'd to represent some *divine transaction* which was to have its completion in this life; and even then was to have a farther reference to something intended by it in another World. But my meaning is, That the best Notion we can frame of a Divine Object, represents nothing of the real nature of the thing to us as it is in it self; if any one finds fault with the word, let them call them by what other Name they

they please, since it is plain they must allow the *thing*.

And now he sees, if he was really blind before, in *what sense this Veil is remov'd*, and in what sense we affirm it to remain. And if he thinks himself able to do it, instead of proving *operosely* what no Man denies, *that the Veil is taken away in Christ*; let him prove the truth of it in that sense which we deny, *viz. That it is taken away, not only as to the Reality, and Existence, and Intent of the things reveal'd, which we allow; but as to the Manner and Properties of them.* So that now we have as perfect a notion and comprehensive a knowledge of them, as we have of the Manner and Properties of any thing in nature; or, in his own Cant, *that we have as clear and distinct Idea's of them as of any sensible Objects.* As for instance, *Jonah's being in the Whale's belly, was a Type of our Saviour's Burial and Resurrection*; and therefore now this is reveal'd, he must make it out, that there is nothing more mysterious in our Saviour's *Death and Resurrection*, than in a Man's being carried into a Vault, and walking out again upon his Legs. The Feast of the *Passover* was a Type of Christ, and represented the Lord's Sup-

per ; and this now is but a Type of the Joys of Heaven, as our Saviour himself makes it by those words, *Henceforth I shall not drink of this fruit of the Vine, till*  
 Matt. 26. *I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom.* But this Man must shew us the real nature of those Pleasures which are here signified by *the fruit of the Vine.*  
 27.

And now that it appears what he was to have prov'd to save me the labour of transcribing, do but look over every *Text* he hath quoted by way of *Proof*, and try to make his *Inference* from it; and then you will be satisfied that *Quaker*, or any other *Enthusiast*, never apply'd Scripture so *impertinently*. Do but apply this distinction of a thing's being reveal'd as to its *Existence and Design*, and the *Relation* it hath to us only; or as to the *manner and property of the thing it self*; and then the little fallacy will appear which runs through his Application of them all. I shall only instance in the two or three first.

P. 90.

I Cor. 2. 7, 8. *We speak the Wisdom of God hid in a Mystery, which God ordain'd before the World for our glory, which none of the Princes of this World knew. From whence he makes this inference, viz. That this divine Wisdom was then a*  
 Mystery



Mystery for want of revealing Information. Who denies it? And to confirm this, he adds the following words, *Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have enter'd into the heart of Man the things which God hath prepar'd for them that love him; but God hath reveal'd them to us by his Spirit.* Which proves no more than what every body owns, *That it was impossible by strength of Reason to have attain'd to the knowledge of those means which God had appointed for our Salvation.* And now they are reveal'd, it is only as to the Truth and Reality of their Existence, as to their Intent, and the Relation they have to us; and not as to the Manner and Properties of them.

The Things here spoke of, which could not have enter'd into the heart of Man, were the *Incarnation of the Son,* and the *Descent of the Holy Ghost*; which were the Contrivances of infinite Wisdom, for the restoration of fallen Man. And this was what the wisest Heads among us cou'd never have thought of. These things were obscur'd in Jewish Types and Ceremonies, and at length God reveal'd it clearly to us, that those were the means he had appointed for our Salvation.

Now

Now the Inference this Man must make, if he would speak to the purpose, is, *That therefore we now know as perfectly the manner of that Conception wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost in a pure Virgin, as of the ordinary way of Generation:* and because it is reveal'd to us that the Holy Ghost works in us, therefore we must know the manner of it as perfectly as we do that of the Nourishment of our Bodies by Meat and Drink.

2 Cor. 3.  
12, 13. The next is, *St. Paul used great plainness of Speech; Ergo* they had as full and perfect a knowledge of every thing he spoke, as they had of a Stock or a Stone. Nay, when he spoke to them of the *depths of the Wisdom of God*, and discours'd to them how he was *caught up into Paradise*, and *heard unspeakable words*, without doubt they that heard him had as lively an impression of this whole Vision on their Imaginations, as he that saw it; nay, as they had of the Man that spoke to them: and we may expect no less from this profound *Revealer of Mysteries*, than that he will quote us all these unspeakable words in his next Book.

And so by the following quotations he thinks he hath knock'd us down,  
when

when any mention is made of the Mystery being made *manifest*, or known to all Nations. Ergo the very Manner and Properties of those things are laid open to us. And therefore this Man (I warrant you) knows as much of the secret Councils of God now, whose Judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out; as he doth of the dark contrivances of that Caball against all reveal'd Religion, where the design of this Book was first laid, and the rest are now a forging. For 'tis well known this *Mystery of iniquity* doth already work; but he who hath hitherto hinder'd, we trust will hinder, till they be taken out of the way, and their wickedness be reveal'd.

And here, if I were dispos'd to be merry, I cou'd make better sport with the *History* of this Man's Life, than he has done with the *Doctor* and his *Parishioner*; for I have trac'd him in this too, from the time he first gave out, he he wou'd be *Head* of a *Sect* before he was thirty years of Age, till he became an *Author*; and from thence to his coming into this Kingdom to spread his *Heresies*, and put his *Designs* in Execution. But I am now upon a *Subject in Divinity*, and not making a *Farce*; and perhaps I may have a another opportunity



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tunity of giving the World a *clear and distinct Idea* of this Man, who thinks himself so *formidable*; and swells with the fancy of having run down three Kingdoms only with one *cross Question*, which is the foundation of all his Book, *viz. How can a Man believe what he doth not know?*

I come now to consider how he answers those *Objections* which are made against this new *Hypothesis* of his in Religion.

Sect. 3.

Chap. 4.

P. 120.

The first sort of *Objections* he brings, are three or four Texts of Scripture, which make nothing against either what he, or we say in this matter; but such as *Enthusiasts* bring against the use of *Reason in Religion*. So that they are wholly impertinent, unless he disputes against the Quakers; and therefore I have no more to do here but to take notice of the *base disingenuity* of the Man, who by this wou'd make *unthinking* or *prejudiced* people believe, that we are those *ignorant perverse Men* he speaks of; and put us upon the same level with the rankest *Enthusiasts*. Whereas he can't but know that we are as vigorous defenders of the use of Reason in Religion as he can be. 'Tis by this  
that



that the truths of all reveal'd Religion are establish'd, and remain unshak'd and the same for ever, in spite of all the opposition of their subtlest enemies. 'Tis by this we confute his Errors, 'tis before the Evidence and Light of Reason that all his *Operose* and laborious Sophisms disappear like empty shadows, and vanish into nothing.

When we thus contend for the use of Reason in *Religion*, then on one side we are charg'd as if we deny'd all *Revelation*; and when we defend the truth of *Revelation*, then on the other side we are charg'd with layng aside our Reason; as if we must needs cease to be *Men*, before we can be Christians. And therefore I shall state a right notion of this matter as clear as I can in short; and that by these degrees.

I. We allow that *sense* and *Reason* are the only faculties we have of knowing or judging of any thing either in *Nature* or *Religion*; and we allow that God in all his *Revelations* applies himself to us by these faculties; and doth not either create any *new* ones, or make any essential alteration in these we have; for then a Stock or a Stone wou'd be as capable

capable of a Divine Revelation, as a Rational Creature. And therefore,

2. We allow that what is not agreeable to these Powers of knowledge we are already endued with, is not to be receiv'd or entertain'd by us; for otherwise God who plac'd these in us, wou'd not be consistent with himself, nor wou'd he have us so.

3. These Powers of knowledge are better suited to the present objects of this life than they are to those of another; for otherwise we argue God of want of *Wisdom*, and *Contrivance*, and if they were now as well fitted for the Objects of another life, there wou'd be no occasion for a change at the last Day.

4. We affirm that all these things of another World, even after they are reveal'd, are totally obscur'd both from our Sense and our Reason as the real Nature and Properties of them as they are in themselves. And this I hope I have sufficiently made out; so that if People will believe any thing at all of another life, they must do so without clear and distinct Ideas of them.

5. That

5. That since we have not *capacities* for them, there is no other way of revealing any thing to us relating to another life, but by *Analogy* with the things of this World. Thus the *Glory* and *Intellectual* Light of Heaven is reveal'd under the notion of that we have from the *Sun*; the *Generation* of the Son of God, under the notion of one Man's proceeding from the Loins of another, &c.

Now therefore let me again distinguish these two things in every *Revelation* or *Mystery*. 1. That *Analogous* Object of this life, under the notion of which God doth reveal any thing of another life to us. And 2. The *thing* it self that is signified by it. As to the first of these, it falls in all respects under the severest censure and trial of our Reason; as to the latter, it is wholly exempted from it. As for instance in this Proposition,

*The Saints shall reign for ever.*

In this *Mystery* the thing reveal'd is the happy and glorious state of the Saints in Heaven. The *Analogous* Object made use of by God for this, is that



that of the *Splendour* and *Grandure* of a Kingdom. In respect of this latter, our Reason hath full scope and 'tis not only *lawful* but *commendable*, nay our *duty*, to be very punctual and exact in our Scrutiny. And therefore we must know the *meaning* of the words, and understand the *matter* of the Proposition; we must be satisfied that it hath no impossibility or contradiction in it. Nay more, our *Reason* must be convinc'd, and must have a clear evidence in our mind, of its coming from God by such *Proofs* to Men's *Senses* and *Reason* of its divinity, as shall convince us that it could come from none but God; such as *Miracles* and *Prophecies*, or the agreeableness of the thing to our common *Notions*; and I am not to give my assent to it unless I have this *Evidence*, which I allow thus far to be the ground of Persuasion. Thus far we are ready to joyn issue with any Adversary of *Revelation* and *Mysteries* purely upon the principles of Reason. And to require it any farther, is no other than to demand a *rational account* from us, of what we grant we have no notion of.

God never requires our *Assent* to any Proposition, but upon such *Testimonies* and *Proofs* as shall cause this Evidence. But as to the thing it self which is signified by this Analogy, as the *real state* and  
condi-

condition of the blest in Heaven is in this Mystery, it is wholly exempted from the enquiry of *Reason*. And herein is my *Faith*, that I give my Assent to a Proposition which is sufficiently prov'd to come from God, though I have no notion at all of that divine truth which is represented to me under the *similitude* of some worldly Object.

And thus you see how *Faith* is nicely and most exactly defin'd. The Evidence, or *ελεγχος* demonstration of things not seen, because *Faith* is no such *precarious implicate* assent, as these Champions for Reason think, but it is the giving our assent to things which though we have no notion at all of now, yet the *reality* and *existence* of them are demonstrated to us by such proofs as raise up in our minds the greatest degree of Evidence for the truth of the Relation. And it is this that will strike all these Opposers of *Faith* and *Revelation* dumb, when they appear at the Tribunal of God; because they will not then have it to say, That God requir'd their Assent to any Proposition, but what they understood as well as they could understand any thing in this World. And for the *Divine Revelation*, of which they had sufficient Proofs (if they did but consider them) to raise up in their minds an *Evidence* as clear and  
I distinct

distinct as they can have of any thing in this World.

And thus he sees how groundless all those Objections are, and malicious Insinuations against us and our most holy Faith; as if we, in any point of it, declin'd the strictest examination of Reason. We are so far from distrusting our Cause, or obliging Men to walk blindfold, that we give their Reason all the helps we can; and Men are never better dispos'd for the belief of our Christian Mysteries, than when they follow the guidance and conduct of it. For our whole Christian Faith is grounded upon the strictest Ratiocination.

P. 126.

And therefore having stated the true extent of Reason in the Mysteries of Religion, I shall now proceed to consider his Friend's Objection against his Book; *viz.* That it destroys the Nature of FAITH. A shrewd Objection it is, and that which he never will evade, though he had the Wisdom of the old Serpent to help him. And that Person, whosever he was, would have been more his Friend, if he had in time opened to him all the other false and impious Consequences of his Book, before it came abroad to spread Infection, and blast the Credit of the Christian



stian *Faith*. But now, alas! it is too late; for nothing is so vain as a Man of some parts, where there is not a true sense of Piety to qualifie them: And therefore he is now to stand by it with his Soul, and venture *Damnation* rather than lessen himself by a publick *Recantation*; in the opinion of a half-learned and debauch'd sort of People, whose Interest it is to run down that *Institution*, which if it be true, must rise up in judgment against them at the last day. P. 126.

The force of the *Objection* lies in this. If we can give our Assent to nothing but what we have a clear and distinct Idea of in the Mind, so as to believe nothing upon the *Worth* and *Veracity* of another Person; then there can be no Assent distinct from *Knowledge*: and thus there can be no *Faith* either *Divine* or *Human*. For if a Man, of whose sincerity you are thoroughly convinc'd, should tell you, That there are a sort of People in the Indies, who scourge their Idols severely, when any thing goes cross to their expectations; it is impossible for you to believe this unless you see it. For though you know the meaning of the Words, and apprehend clearly what an Idol is, and what it is to scourge it; yet if the relations of ten thousand People, and ever so many circumstances

stances concurr'd to the truth of it, yet you can never give your assent to it upon any other terms than he did who saw it; for nothing else can give you this evidence or knowledge of the truth and reality of it, which he makes the only ground of our persuasion.

And then if we can't give our assent even to the Reality and Existence of any thing, but when we have clear and distinct Idea's of the *real modes* and *properties of it as it is in its self*, then we can believe nothing either of God or of any thing relating to another World; For I have made it sufficiently appear that it is utterly impossible for us now to have such Idea's of them. Therefore now let us see how he endeavours to get over this. My Reader thinks I warrant, that he is going about to reconcile the *Christian Faith* with his *Principles*. But instead of this, he spends sixteen Pages in shewing you there is no such thing as Faith; as you will see plainly. I shall take him in order, and answer every Paragraph, because this is the most plausible part of his Sophistry.

P. 127.

First, he tells us that to be confident of any thing without conceiving it, is  
no

no *Real Faith* or *Perswasion*; but a rash *Presumption*, and an obstinate *Prejudice*.

If he means by not conceiving it, not understanding the meaning of the Proposition reveal'd, he is in the right of it; but if he means by conceiving it, the having as full and compleat a knowledge of the thing reveal'd, as we have of any Phenomena of nature, 'tis absolutely false; for, as I have shewn at large, we may give our assent to the Existence of things when we can't conceive any thing at all of their real nature: And that our *Christian Faith* is however no rash *Presumption* or obstinate *Prejudice*, because it is founded upon sufficient testimonies of the truth and reality of the propositions believ'd in things whereof we have clear and distinct *Idea's*.

This is the thing he drives at, viz. that we have a full and compleat knowledge of the things believ'd; and to make it plausible, he says that God hath no interest to delude his Creatures, nor wants ability to inform them. *Ergo*, he reveals nothing but what he makes them perfectly comprehend. Therefore he hath not reveal'd any thing of the eternal Generation of the Son, the change of our Bodies, the Joys of Heaven, of the O-



*perations* of the Spirit, &c. because if God had reveal'd them, he wou'd have made you conceive the manner of all these perfectly; and if he did not, it was certainly want of sincerity or ability in him. But let this *Blasphemer* know, that it is neither want of *Veracity*, nor ability in God that is the reason why we don't conceive these things, but the *Weakness* and *Imperfection* of our present *state*, who have no capacities for them as yet. And therefore as we now give our assent to the Reality and Existence of what we can't conceive, upon that veracity of God which he hath thus endeavour'd to rob of all its Authority, and Influence upon our assent; so God will one day manifest his *Power*, in bringing all those things to pass, which we can't now conceive; and will so enlarge our Souls that we shall clearly apprehend them, and all the Objects of another World. He proceeds, and says, that

P. 128.

God wou'd lose his end if what he said did not agree with our common notions; (i. e.) If God shou'd speak *Nonsense* to you in his *Revelations* you wou'd be never the wiser; for if he should reveal to you that a thing call'd *B L I C R I* had a being in nature, and not in form

form you what this *Blictri* was, you could not believe it. Now this very instance which he intends by way of *Ridicule* of all the Objects of our holy *Faith*, doth happily shew the true difference between a *rational Assent* and a *blind Credulity*; and is a sufficient Confutation of his whole Book. Let us therefore compare these two words *B L I C T R I*, and *G L O R Y*.

Of the first I know nothing more than that it is made up of seven Letters; and therefore he that speaks it is a *Barbarian* to me. And as I know nothing of it, so I can believe nothing concerning it, but the uncertain sound it makes to my ear; and that seven Letters make two Syllables in writing.

As to the other word *Glory*, I grant I know as little of the real nature of the *Glory* of God, and of the Saints in Heaven, as I do what that *Blictri* means; and yet God doth not speak *Nonsense*, when he reveals to me that there is such a thing in Heaven as *Glory*. For 1<sup>st</sup>. Though I have no notion of the thing as it is in it self, yet it is represented to me by the brightness of the Sun, and *Glory* of a Kingdom, the greatest Images I now am able to frame of it. 2. I am made acquainted

I 4

quainted with the *Relation* this *Glory* hath to me, viz. *That it expects me in the Heavens*; that I shall enjoy it, and be made partaker of it; and that it will render me happy beyond all imagination. But I am no more able to conceive that Happiness, than that *Glory of God* which shall be the cause of it. And 3. It is reveal'd by God with this design, that it shou'd be a prevailing motive of my Obedience, and an incitement to the practice of *Vertue and Holiness*. 4. I have not capacities at present to apprehend the real nature of it as perfectly as I can apprehend any thing in nature if it were discovered to me. And thus we see how God in all his Revelations doth not speak Nonsense to us, though we have not clear and distinct Idea's of the things which are reveal'd. Nay, though we have no more Idea of them as they are in themselves, than we have of what *Blictri* is.

P. 129. Besides the Text he brings to back this Sophism of his, explains the matter farther and lays open the Fallacy, *Heb. 11. 6. He that comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* By which we see all that is knowable of God by us now is his *Existence*, and the *Relation* he hath to us, *That he is a Rewarder* of



of them that diligently seek him. For I hope he will own that we are bound to believe all we know of God, though he flatly denies that we are bound to believe any thing more in him than what we know, as well at least as we do any thing else.

He goes on and asks, *without conceiving* P. 130. *Faith after this manner, (i. e.) without making it nothing else but knowledge, How could Christ be term'd the light of the World? and how could we be said to have the Spirit of Wisdom? (i. e.) unless he gives you as clear and distinct Idea's of every thing he reveals, as you have of a Stock or a Stone. I answer by giving us a clear and distinct Revelation of their Existence, of which we should have been wholly ignorant but for him; for thus he hath made us wise unto Salvation, since he hath given us a clear Knowledge of our Duty, and back'd his Precepts with the promise of future rewards, which we have no notion of; and the best thought we can frame of them is, that they exceed all that we can think or speak.*

But, says he, *That remarkable instance of Abraham's Faith will be objected.* Yes, 'tis objected, and the way he answers it, is by saying as we do, and leaving his own

P. 132.

own Opinion to shift for it self. God promised *Abraham* to give him a numerous Progeny in *Isaac*; after this, before *Isaac* hath a Child, God commands him to sacrifice his only Son; He obeys upon this consideration, that God was able to raise him up again, by the same power that he at first rais'd him out of the deadness of *Sarah's* Womb. Now the question between him and me, is not *Whether this Faith was a firm Perswasion built upon Substantial Reasons*, which we allow and contend for, and therefore he says nothing to the purpose. But the question is, *Whether Abraham gave his assent to what he was not able to comprehend*, which he must own; unless he proves that *Abraham* knew as perfectly the whole manner of God's raising a Body from the dead, or from a Womb past Child-bearing, as he did the procreation of it in the ordinary way of Nature. Had *Abraham* been able to demonstrate that God would raise his Son, and to conceive exactly the manner how this was to be brought to pass, then indeed it were no *Faith*, but Knowledge; but instead of this he had only the promise of God for it; and knew no more how God would raise him, than he knew how he made the World.

After

After this he lays down several Ob-  
servations to prove there can be no such  
thing as Faith, (*i. e.*) an assent distinct  
from Knowledge.

1. If Faith were not a Perswasion result-  
ing from a comprehension of the thing be-  
liev'd, there could be no degrees in it. I  
answer this is false like all the rest, for  
though I know nothing more of a thing  
than its Existence, and the Relation it  
hath to me, and therefore am far from  
comprehending it; Yet my assent to the  
truth of it, shall vary in degrees either  
according to the Proofs I have for it, or  
according as I weight and consider them.

2. The Subject of Faith must be intelli-  
gible to all, since the belief thereof is com-  
manded under no less a penalty than Dam-  
nation. Who doubts it? let him if he can  
produce one proposition we believe which  
is not intelligible. But because we don't  
fully comprehend the thing spoke of, are  
we therefore wholly ignorant of any thing  
relating to it, and must we reject it all  
as Fallacy and Imposture? If it be said  
He that believeth not shall be damn'd,  
Mark 16. 16. then what will become of  
him that takes all this pains to shew  
there is no such thing as Faith? Especi-  
ally



ally since rhe Belief there meant is something plainly distinct from Knowledge. For sure he doth not think the meaning of that Text is this; *He that hath not as full and comprehensive a knowledge of God and the things reveal'd as he hath of any thing in Nature, shall be Damn'd*, which is all his notion of Faith. Again,

P. 135. 3. *If any part of Scripture were unintelligible, it could never be rightly translated. A very wise Observation: who ever question'd it? But as I have shewn, there is a great deal of difference between understanding the meaning of the words, and having a comprehensive knowledge of the thing intended by them. As I understand very well the meaning of these words, When Christ appears we shall be like him, though I am wholly ignorant wherein this likeness will consist; so that I can however translate the sense of that Proposition exactly and perfectly. And therefore 'tis such Wretches as He who affirm the contrary, that plentifully furnish the Atheistical and Prophane, with all the matter of their objections against Scripture. But I hope in time God will put it into the hearts of our Governours to remedy these disorders.*

4. Except Faith signifies an intelligible P. 136.  
 Perswasion, we cannot give others a reason  
 of our Hope. 'Tis very true, it is an In-  
 telligible Perswasion, and grounded upon  
 the strictest Reason. But he with a hardy  
 confidence openly pretends, that we de-  
 ny people are to examine and under-  
 stand their Faith; and so runs into a com-  
 parison between Christ and the Idol of the  
 Siamoses upon our Principles. Now he  
 is past all Reason and Modesty, and there-  
 fore I have no more to do here but deli-  
 ver him up into the hands of our Gover-  
 nours. We may confute his Errors, but  
 'tis They only can suppress his Insolence;  
 We only can endeavour to heal those  
 who are already Infected; 'tis They alone  
 can hinder the Infection from spreading  
 farther.

5. That either the Apostles would not P. 137.  
 write more intelligibly of the reputed Mys-  
 teries, or they would not. I answer that all  
 that we are able to understand of these  
 Real Mysteries, they have made so plain,  
 that they could not, neither need they  
 have made them more plain and intelli-  
 gible. As for the other part of them,  
 they knew as little of it as we do; and  
 therefore we don't Rail at them as he  
 doth at all the Clergy, as if they had in-  
 dustri-

dustriously conceal'd any thing from us which they knew themselves.

He goes on, 'Tis affirm'd that God hath a right to require the assent of his Creatures to what they can't comprehend. Yes he has, and accordingly doth require it. And again I say 'tis Blasphemy to affirm that in this he is guilty of such a Tyranny as only becomes the Devil. He requires our assent to the Eternal generation of the Son; the Trinity of Persons, and Divinity of Christ; the Resurrection of our Bodies, and change of them into the likeness of Christ, &c. though we can't comprehend them. And yet he is so far from acting like a Tyrant in this, that he acts like a merciful God, and a tender Father. For he herein condescends to our capacities, and Reveals the methods of our Salvations, and the future state of Heaven to us, after such a manner as we are able to understand them, and promiseth that if they have that influence upon us which he designs, (*i. e.*) to excite our Gratitude, and make us *Veracious and Holy*; he will at the resurrection of our bodies, give us capacities to see them clearly as they are in themselves. So that these Mysteries are to be understood at last, but not till we come to another World. And therefore God doth not reveal them only to puzzle our heads, but for



for wise and excellent ends, viz. to bring Mankind to salvation by such *Methods*, as are consistent with the *Freedom* of his nature.

From all these *Observations* he concludes, *That to give our Assent to any thing above Reason in his Sense is contradictory.* 1. *To the ends of Religion*, whereas I have shewn at large that upon this supposition, there can be no Religion at all either natural or reveal'd. 2. *To the nature of Man*, (i. e.) because no Man can believe what he knows nothing of; but this Quibble I have sufficiently remov'd. And, 3. *To the goodness and wisdom of God*, who as he intimated before, is as much a Tyrant as the Devil, for requiring us to believe any thing we can't comprehend.

If God had requir'd us to give our assent to what we knew nothing at all of, he would have requir'd *Impossibilities*; if he had requir'd us to give our assent to what we had no *Proof* or *Evidence* for, he would have requir'd what was *Unreasonable*; but when he adapts the Revelation of things which we cannot apprehend to our Capacities, under the notions of things which we do apprehend clearly and fully, it is the greatest Argument of his Wisdom. And when he requires no assent from us without sufficient arguments

ments of Conviction to any considering unprejudic'd Person. It is a great instance of his *Goodness*. And these Revelations of things above our Reason to comprehend, as they are most powerful incitements to *Gratitude* here; so they will be the subject of our *Praise* and *thanksgiving* hereafter, when the Veil is perfectly remov'd, and that we are enabled to apprehend them clearly.

P. 135.

Now after all this pains to shew that there is no such thing as *Faith* distinct from *Knowledge*, he says this will be objected against him. He is in the right of it, this will be ever objected against him, till he recants his Error publicly?

But how doth he endeavour to evade it? Why, *That Knowledge which is the present and immediate view of a thing is not Faith*. He says well. But what is?

*Faith is only the understanding what is believ'd*. He will stand by it with Soul and Body that Faith is nothing else. That the understanding what is believ'd, is necessary in order to Faith no one denies; but any Man of common Sense may see, that this and the other definition, are the same; for pray what is Understanding

*what*

what is believ'd, but having a present immediate knowledge of it, unless he will say a Man can't believe a thing till he hath forgot he knew it. That which constitutes the formal act of *Faith* as it is distinct from Knowledge, is an *Assent upon the Authority of another Person*. But according to him, Authority is no ground of Persuasion, and Faith is only the understanding what is believ'd. Therefore there can be no such thing as any *Assent* distinct from *Knowledge*.

And now have I done this Man any *Wrong*, by charging him with endeavouring to *destroy* the *Faith* of the Gospel, and to overthrow the whole *Christian Religion*. In the face of a Christian Government, and in *Defiance* of all Laws and Power *Ecclesiastical* and *Civil*; He tells them plainly that *Faith* is nothing more than understanding what is believ'd (*i.e.*) there is no such thing as Faith distinct from Knowledge; and consequently the *Faith* of Christians is nothing but *Implicit* Assent and blind *Credulity*.

And therefore here again I wou'd deliver him into the hands of the Magistrate, not mov'd by any heat of Passion, but by such a *Zeal* as becomes every Christian to have for his *Religion*.

K

For



P. 110. For here he pleads a *Toleration*, but for what? I hope there is no *Toleration* for *Blasphemy* and *Prophaneness*; and though Men are allow'd to believe what they please themselves, yet sure they may be restrain'd from industriously spreading such *Impious Notions* as are destructive of all *Religion*, and from openly reviling the *Christian Faith* as *Imposture* and *Implicit blind Credulity*.

P. 140. Again, 'tis objected against him, *That his notions of Faith make Revelation useless*. Yes it doth; for though we understand the *Words* of the *Proposition* reveal'd ever so well, and comprehend the thing spoke of as fully as we do a *Stock* or a *Stone*; yet we can never give our assent to the truth of the *Relation*; because that after all is done, we must take this upon the *Word* of another. But much more doth it make all the *Revelations* of the *Gospel* *useless*, because we have no clear and distinct *Idea's* of them, and therefore must utterly reject them all upon this score likewise.

But in opposition to all that can be said, this *Positive Man* asserts here, what he hath been *Asserting* from the beginning of his *Book*, but gives no reason for; *That Revelation is only of use to inform us,*  
*whilst*

whilst the Evidence of it's Subject persuades us. Then, reply we, if so, you must believe all Relations true or false indifferently, when you understand the meaning of the Words, and know the nature of the thing spoken of. Nay, if two contrary Propositions equally intelligible be related, he must believe them both.

And therefore now I hope he won't take it ill of the World, if they believe me when I inform them, that this Book which goes under his name, was the *joyn'd Endeavours* of a secret Club, who set themselves with a great deal of Industry to destroy all *Reveal'd Religion*, And that they have made use of this Man as a *Tool* only, and have push't him before them, to try with what safety such *Principles* as these may be openly avow'd in opposition to all that is establish'd among us; that they might follow and openly maintain what they have been forging in secret Cabals.

Now this is a matter of Fact, and whosoever reads this must believe it; because they understand the meaning of the Words, and know the nature of every thing that is spoke of in them; for *Faith is nothing else but understanding what is believ'd*; and if they understand what is

spoke of, they must bow before the Light and Majesty of this knowledge. And therefore I hope he will never contradict me in this or any thing else I relate of him ; for if he says the contrary, then either the World must believe us both when we relate two contrary Propositions, or they must be sway'd one way or the other by his *Authority* or *Mine* ; and whether they believe him or me, it will sufficiently confute him, for it will shew that Authority may be a ground of Perswasion as well as a means of Information. If they believe neither of us, then it will appear they are not under such a necessity of bowing before the Light and Majesty of that *Evidence* he contends for in all relations.

The last Objection he raises against this Principle of his, is that Passage, 1 Pet. 2. 12. Where there is this Expression, *Which things the Angels desire to look into.* The things spoken of here, are the methods of our Salvation by the *Incar-nation* of the Son of God, and *Descent* of the Holy Ghost, and 'tis said in the *time present* that the Angels *Desire* to look into them. And I think a natural inference from hence, that these things yet are Mysteries even to them in a great degree ; which we need not much wonder



der at when they don't so much as know when the day of *Judgment* will be, and therefore we may the less wonder they are Mysteries to us.

But we will suppose that this Expression is meant of the time past. And then let me ask him these two Questions concerning it.

1. Whether the Angels did believe those things they are said to enquire into, or no; if they did believe them, then we find 'tis very possible to believe things that we can't comprehend; for if the Angels understood them fully when they believ'd, why shou'd they desire to search into them?

2. Whether, now these things are come to pass, he will assert that we have as full and comprehensive a knowledge of them all as the Angels have. If we have not, then we may believe things we do not comprehend. If we have, then there is no difference between ours and the state of the Blest in Heaven, at least in respect of knowledge.

The last *Objection* he brings against his C. 3. own Principles, is *That which is drawn from P. 144. the consideration of Miracles.* And this like-

wife is so strong an objection against him, that the very supposition of one true Miracle wrought in confirmation of any point of Doctrine, quite overthrows his whole Book. For,

- P. 145. 1. The *thing it self* is in a great degree *Mysterious*, and therefore if he will allow these things related of our Saviour, to be true Miracles, he must allow there are Mysteries in Christianity. But he endeavours to evade this by the same Quibble he did the Doctrines of the Gospel being *Mysterious*, viz. by saying the miraculous action must be something in it self *Intelligible* and *Possible*. Who denies it? but it is however *Mysterious* still. And to lay open this Fallacy we must distinguish the two things that are to be consider'd in every Miracle. And 1. The *substance of the thing perform'd*, we grant must be very *Intelligible* and *Possible*; for as he says, *Contradiction is only another word for Impossible, or nothing*. 2. The *manner of performing it*, which is totally obscur'd from us, and lies out of the reach of all our Capacities. As to instance in that Miracle of our Saviour's Feeding five thousand People with five Loaves. We understand very well what it is, for a great number of Men to eat and be satisfied; and what it is

is for a small quantity of Bread to be encreas'd to a mighty bulk : but as to the manner how this was perform'd, we are wholly ignorant of it, though we know well how Corn is encreas'd in the ordinary way of nature.

But he will object here as he did concerning the *Doctrines*, viz. That at this rate *All the Phænomena of Nature* are miraculous, for we know not the true manner of any one of them. And this is the main drift of this Chapter, to give us a wrong notion of a *Miracle*, viz. That it *P. 150.* is nothing more than the dextrous management of second causes, and not any immediate effect of Almighty God; and therefore in the close he tells us, *That Miracles are wrought according to the laws of Nature, though above its ordinary operations, which are therefore supernaturally assisted.* And this is the reason of that bold and arrogant expression of his, *That could he tell how a Miracle was wrought, he believes he might do it as much himself.* For there is nothing more in it than in a Chymical Operation, and if he were Philosopher enough, he would work any Miracle of them all.

But the true notion of a *Miracle* is, that it is *An operation wrought by the im-*



*meditate power of God not by Assisting only, but Overruling the laws of Nature; not only by hastning and accelerating its Operations, but sometimes by an instantaneous production, of what was never to be effected by the united force of all natural causes. As to instance in the Raising the a Body from the Dead, all the united force of nature with the most dextrous management, wou'd not be able to effect this; all the Extracting, Mollifying, Mixing, Infusing, Consolidating, &c. And the ministry not only of Thousands, but of Millions at once, wou'd not be able to unite a Soul and Body again, when once they are separated: nothing less than the Almighty immediate act of God is able to effect this, and that without the concurrence of any natural Cause.*

*Again, there are some Miraculous Operations which are so far from being according to the laws of nature, that they are contrary to them. As that of the Sun's going back or standing still, all the Laws of nature are dispos'd for it's motion, or at least for the motion of our Earth which makes it seem to us to move.*

*2Kin.6.6. Again, The making Iron to swim: Were this effect produc'd by Mollifying, Consolidating, &c. or any Operation which shou'd*

shou'd convert the substance of *Iron* into that of *Wood*, then we could not say that *Iron* swam, but something else; or if the *Water* were condens'd to support it, then it wou'd be *Ice* and not *water*; and if any thing of this nature were done of a sudden, it wou'd however be miraculous, but not contrary to nature. But for a solid piece of *Iron* while it remains such, to swim in *water* no way condens'd, this is not only above, but contrary to the laws of nature.

And so likewise for *Fire* not to burn, is contrary to nature. Indeed if there were nothing more in it than what this Man supposes, that it is done by repelling the Heat, and keeping off the Flames, then it might be according to the Laws of Nature, and there are many things which by an instantaneous application might extinguish the *Fire*. But to hinder *Fire* from burning while it remains such, and combustible matter actually in it, this is contrary to the laws of nature. P. 135.

But all those Miracles which are not so directly contrary to nature, can't however be said to be according to the laws of nature. And I take these two Expressions to be directly opposite. Which he makes the same, Miracles are according to the

*the laws of nature. And, they are above the operations of it.* For to instance in the first Miracle our Saviour wrought, that of Turning *Water into Wine.* The production of *Wine* according to the laws of nature, must have been by accelerating the growth of the *Vine*, and ripening the *Grape* suddenly, by application of all those things in nature which could forward it: but to turn *Water* immediately into *Wine*, without any of these methods, was to produce it after a manner wholly different from all the laws of nature.

P. 147. Upon his Principles we have no way, from the nature of the thing, of distinguishing between the *Delusions* of the Devil, those celebrated *Feats of Goblins, and Witches, and Conjurers* which he speaks of; and those which are wrought by the *Finger of God.* For without doubt the Devil is a great *Philosopher*, and can manage second Causes, so as to produce Effects according to the laws of nature, which shall appear very strange to us. But we are sure nothing less than that power which is the Author of Nature, can work any real effect contrary to it, or above it. The Devil in deed may delude Men's senses, so as to make them think that *Real* which is only an appearance; as it is likely he did to mimick that  
mi-



miracle of turning *Aaron's Rod* into a *Serpent*; for that of the Magicians was not a real *Conversion*, but effect by their *Enchantments*, or as 'tis in the original, by their *Wiles* and *Juggling*. For we find when they endeavour'd to imitate *Moses* in the instantaneous production of any real thing with *Life*, there the Devil fail'd them, and they were forc'd to own it was the Finger of God.

And thus we see plainly, how this Man strikes at the foundation of all *Reveal'd Religion*, by undermining one of the main *Pillars* on which the Faith and Credit of it is founded. You see his drift all long in every thing he says, is to take away all *Operations* above the Laws of *Nature*, and all *Doctrines* above the reach of *Reason*; and then all the Religion of Men is consequently resolv'd into *Infidelity*, and *Heathenism*. So that any one who wishes *Christianity* to be true, must hope at least that this Man's Principles are false, since they are so utterly inconsistent.

2. But secondly, As miracles being in a great degree *Mysterious* is an unanswerable objection against him; so they are altogether useless and impertinent upon his Principles. He owns that God P. 146.  
does not work them at random, but for some  
end,

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end, and this he owns is for the confirmation of some divine Doctrine. But why for the confirmation of a Doctrine? for he hath told us over and over, that it is only the Evidence or immediate knowledge of the Doctrine it self can persuade us. That Faith is nothing more than the knowing what is believ'd, &c. And therefore all Miracles for the confirmation of any Doctrine are needless and superfluous. If they are so evident to our Senses or our Reason that we know them to be true, what necessity is there of farther conviction? if a thing be so evident to my Senses or Reason, that I know it to be true, nothing can make me surer of it.

So that we see the reason of Miracles is, that they may be a proof of something that we cannot comprehend.

But it may be objected here that at this rate, if both the Doctrines and Miracles are mysterious, Then you prove one Mystery by another. I answer that they are not equally Mysterious, for a mysterious Doctrine is totally obscur'd from us, both as to the manner and substance of the thing signified, as it is in it self. But in a Miracle the substance of the thing is obvious and intelligible, and the Manner only of the operation is conceal'd. And therefore in

in so doing, that which is *more* mysteri-  
ous is prov'd by that which is *less* so.

But this *Blunderer* will tell you, that P. 150.  
the *Doctrines* themselves are very know-  
able in all respects, but *Miracles* are whol-  
ly obscur'd as to the manner of them;  
And yet in the same breath Own, that  
these obscure *Miracles*, are for confirma-  
tion of these plain *Doctrines*. This is an-  
other piece of his Logick, to prove *Notum*  
*per Ignotius*.

He can't say that though the *Doctrines*  
are plain, yet that they came from God is  
not so: and therefore *Miracles* were to  
assure us of this. For if the knowing  
they come from God makes us give our  
assent to them, then *Authority* is a ground  
of Perswasion. And besides if they have  
that *Evidence* of their truth in themselves,  
which he contends for, let them come  
from whence they will we must give our  
assent to them.

And now I am come to his last Chap-  
ter, wherein he pretends to give an ac-  
count *When, Why and by Whom, Mysteries*  
*were brought into Christianity*. There is  
not here so much as a pretence of reason-  
ing, but several vile *Insinuations* against  
all the *Primitive Christians*, against the  
Clergy of all Ages, and against *Christia-*

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nity it self, making it as it is now profess, only a sort of *Heathenism*, and the Ministers of it in all respects no better than *Pagan Priests*.

By the Title of this Chapter he was to have shewn how these Mysteries came into Christianity; but instead of this (of which he says not a word) he talks in general how some Ceremonies were introduc'd, and some Doctrines abus'd to Superstition. The dispute all along was about *Mysteries*, and now it is turn'd to *Ceremonies*; of which he speaks too after a confused manner, making no difference between the *Orthodox* and *Heretical* Professors, but charging all the Mistakes and Errors of every Sect indifferently, upon the whole body of Christians in the general. That Miscarriages and Errors crept in, and that the Christian Religion was corrupted and abus'd by many in the Primitive times to Superstition, is without all doubt; it is so now, and is like to be so to the end of the World; for *it must needs be that Offences come*. But what is all this to those who are not guilty of these things? Suppose every thing in this Chapter true, what is all this to us? who in the Celebration of *Baptism* and the *Supper*, have rejected all these numerous Rites and Superstitious Ceremonies which he speakes of. As

As for those Ceremonies retain'd by us, it is time enough to defend them when he says any thing against them; and proves, either that *the Worship of God and Celebration of the Sacraments can be perform'd without any Ceremonies.* Or That *those which we have retain'd are unlawful.*

All he wou'd insinuate here of them, is, that they were in use among the Heathens; and the force of what he says, if it hath any, is this. Heathens us'd a *White Garment* in their Idolatrous Worship, they had certain *Times*, and *Places*, and *Persons*, and *Actions*, appropriated to the Worship of their Idols; therefore 'tis unlawful to have any thing of this nature in the Worship of the true God.

The Heathens us'd Washings; *Ergo*, p. 157. *Baptism* is unlawful. The Heathens used *Eating* and *Drinking* in honour of their Gods; *Ergo*, the Eating and Drinking in remembrance of Christ is Superstitious. And thus by a direct and immediate consequence he destroys the Doctrine of the *Sacraments*. Let him if he can, shew what else can possibly be inferred from all this ridiculous incoherent stuff.

What

What he would insinuate here concerning the *Sacraments*, is, that by a multitude of *Ceremonies*, we obscure the nature of them, we make them *Mysterious*, and do not Celebrate them with that simplicity they were at first instituted. But let him in his next Book shew, what it is that we know our selves concerning the *Sacraments*, which we conceal from the People. In short, let him make out that he hath any other drift in this whole Chapter, than to shew that there is no difference between *Christianity* and *Heathenism*.

All this is by way of *Amusement* to People who do not know when a Man speaks to the purpose ; *Ceremonies* are not *Mysteries*, nor do they make a thing *Mysterious*. Those things which we call *Mysterious*, are the *Nature and Attributes of God* ; the *Eternal Generation and Incarnation of the Son*, and *Proceffion of the Holy Ghost* ; The *Union of the Divine and Human Natures in Christ* ; the *Resurrection of our Bodies* ; the *Operations and Influences of the Holy Spirit of God upon ours* ; the *Trinity of Persons in the Godhead* ; the *Glory and Felicity of the Saints in Heaven* ; The *Solemnity of the last Judgment*, &c. These are the *Mysterious Doctrines*



Articles of our Religion. Let him shew us *When, Why, and by Whom*, these reputed *Mysteries*, as he calls them, were brought into Christianity. For we affirm that they were brought into Christianity by *Christ himself*; who alone was able to reveal them. That they came in at the first publication of the Gospel; and with design to make us *wise unto Salvation*; and therefore *we own our selves so fond of them*, that we will hazard any thing, *Life and all*, rather than part with them.

And thus I have gone through his Book, and answered every thing that look'd like *Reasoning* in it. If he will shew me where I have overlook'd any thing that hath the appearance of an Argument; or where my *Answer* fails, I will promise him not to let it pass. And if any are offended with my manner of treating him, I doubt not but they will be satisfied if they but consider what *St. Paul* said to *Elymas* the Sorcerer upon a like occasion, *O full of all Subtily and all Mischief, thou Child of the Devil, thou Enemy of all Righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?*

In the next Book he speaks of, he has two things to perform.

I.

1. To

1. To shew that we are not oblig'd by Scripture, to believe that there is any thing, in any point of the Christian Faith which we do not comprehend as fully and perfectly, as we do the common Objects of this World.

2. To discover to all the World those secrets in Religion, which the Clergy have industriously conceal'd from the Laity, under the notion of *Mysteries*, and make them so plain that they shall cease to be such ; so that every one of them shall be as wise as e'er a Priest of us all. And indeed, he is much to blame that defers it all this while ; He that pretends so much Zeal and Concern for the *Vulgar*, shou'd not let them remain so long in Ignorance, to be thus miserably impos'd upon, by the craft and cunning of their Priests.

What *strange unheard of design* this Man has in that second Book, which is now a forging, is hard to tell. For by it he is to inform the World of things they never *heard or thought of* ; He is to reveal to us more than ever *Jesus Christ* hath done ; and what never yet cou'd enter into the Heart of Man to think, or into his imagination to frame any true and *proper* notion

tion of. If the World had any opinion of his Abilities to perform what he pretends with this *hard Confidence*, we shou'd all of us expect this *wonderful Book* with much impatience. Certainly by all these promises of so much New Light to the World, which hath liv'd in Darkness so many hundred Years, we can't guess he designs to be no more than Head of an ordinary Sect, but to be as famous an Impostor as *Mahomet*. He hath laid a fair foundation for it, for he avers positively in one place, *That if he knew the way how a Miracle was wrought, he wou'd work it himself*. And again, he openly says, *That nothing related in the Gospel is Mystorious; either as to the Manner or Substance of the thing*, and therefore 'tis not unlikely that we shall have this Man shortly confirming his Doctrines with Miracles.

For my part, I can't imagine how he will go about what he hath undertaken; however, thus much I dare venture to promise him, that whenever any thing is built upon that Rotten Foundation which is here laid, by the *Grace of God*, I will pull it down.

When this Book of his comes out (which after all will tell us no more concerning these Mysteries, than what



P. 150.

we have heard an *hundred times over*; but by what he promises must take place of the *Bible* it self, which gives us no such clear and distinct Idea's of the things of another World.) Then we shall give a better guess at the design of the Man. In the mean time, I shall only say a little more concerning the *Pretended*, and the *Real Drift* of this Book. And,

I. The *Pretended Drift* of it is, To free the *Christian Religion* from that *Darkness and Obscurity*, in which it is involv'd by the *Contrivance* of its *Preachers*, only to gain a *Reputation* to their *Persons and Profession*; and to make it such a *Religion* as God design'd it, (i. e.) a *Religion* for all *Men*. But how doth he go about this? By scraps of *Metaphysical Abstractions*, which were tolerable where he found them, but spoilt in the *Application*. By talking of *Adequate, Inadequate, and Intermediate Idea's*; by the *Nominal and Real Essence of things*; by *frivolous distinctions* between the *Means of Information*, and grounds of *Perswasion*; and by little *Niceties* concerning the *degrees of Perspicuity* in *Divine and Humane Revelations*, &c. This is the method this grand Reformer takes, to restore *Christianity* to its *Native Simplicity*, and make it a *Religion* for all *People*. Whereas it is not *One of ten Thousand*

stand that knows the meaning of any of these Words and Phrases, by which he *darkens* what is in it self Plain and Obvious, and renders every thing in Religion a Mystery to them. And yet this is the very Man that talks so much against the new Converted Philosophers, for confounding their Philosophy and Divinity together, and by that means, rendering every thing abstruse by Terms. And who rails at our Clergy for *darkning* every thing in Religion, and industriously concealing it from the People. P. 154.

2. As to the *Real design* of this Man, 'tis plain it is no other than what he formerly declar'd, and what he openly affects, viz. to be the Head of a Sect, and set up for a Reformer. For besides many General Expressions, he hath several very particular ones to this purpose; as where he says, *That the very nature and use of the Sacraments are absolutely perverted and destroy'd, and are not yet fully restor'd by the purest Reformations in Christendom.* And that Expression in the Close of his Book, *Because several turn'd Libertines and Atheists, when Priest-craft was laid so open at the Reformation; were Luther, Calvin, or Zwinglius to be blam'd for it?* which is spoke by way of Defence of that great Reformation he intends, whatever the ill Consequences of it are. I; Now P. 163.

Now the *Method* he hath taken to effect this grand Design of his, is first to *Amuse* the generality of People with a little shew of Learning, by *hard Words*, and several impertinent *Quotations* to get a Reputation among them.

Sect. 3  
C. vi.

P. 163.

P. 141.

P. 167.

His next *Business* was to insinuate into the minds of People a dis-esteem of the Religion they now profess, and make them believe that *Christianity*, as it is now receiv'd, is no better than *Heathenism*; which he doth by comparing them in several instances, and tells us plainly, *He hath said enough to shew how the Divine Institution of Christianity, through the Craft and Ambition of Priests and Philosophers, did degenerate into meer Paganism.* He calls our Principles *narrow bigoted Tenets*. And in short, saysthey are a *Mystery of iniquity*. He calls the present *Theology, the Gibberish of our Divinity Schools, and the Language of the Beast*. He would have no *Ceremonies, no Times, Places, or Particular Actions* for the *Worship of God, &c.*

● And notwithstanding all these *virulent Expressions*, and many more through his whole Book, against the Religion profess'd and establish'd among us; He says, *That*



That such is the deplorable condition of our Preface, Age, that a Man dares not openly and directly own what he thinks of Divine matters, if it but very slightly differ from what is received by any Party; or that is establish'd by Law. And therefore, He that hath openly said so much already, what is it he would not say, were it not for the Laws? Undoubtedly he hath a great deal more to say, whenever this new SECT of his becomes so numerous, that they shall out-brave the Laws, and labour for a Publick Reformation of all the Mysterious Doctrines of the Gospel.

Had this Man made any of the Mysteries of our Religion more clear and intelligible than they were before, He had done worthily; and might have hop'd for a Reward from God, and Esteem from Men; And the Ministers of the Gospel wou'd have been so far from resenting it, that they wou'd have thank'd him for it, and not fail'd to have acquainted their People with it. But by this Scurrilous Libel upon all these Doctrines which are the ground and foundation of Christianity; and by Railing at all the Teachers and Professors of it for sixteen hundred Years, as if they had all been Fools, and Knaves, and Bigots at the best, till He appear'd in the World; He is justly be-

come odious and detestable by all Men who have any concern left for the Christian Religion.

P. 172. 'Tis true, he hath set his Forehead like  
 Acts 144. a Flint, and is prepar'd with Obstinacy  
 and Resolution against all that can be said  
 or done against him. For God knows, he  
 no more values this ridiculous Nick-name of  
 a Heretick, than Paul did before him. But  
 sure there is a great deal of difference  
 between St. Paul's being call'd a Here-  
 tick for Preaching the Resurrection of the  
 1 Cor 15. Dead, and saying the manner of it is My-  
 5. sterious. And this Man's Contradicting him,  
 and saying, the manner of it is not My-  
 sterious; and by his Principles, undermi-  
 ning the foundation of all Reveal'd and  
 Natural Religion.

Another way of effecting what he de-  
 signs, is by loading the Clergy in general  
 with Reproaches, and charging them with  
 most detestable Frauds to serve the vilest  
 ends. He declares himself in his Preface,  
 An open implacable Enemy to all Clergy-  
 men, who make a meer Trade of Religion,  
 and build unjust Authority upon the Consciences  
 of the Laity (i. e.) to all Clergymen  
 who are not of his Opinion, he is a pro-  
 fess Adversary; and He hopes every good  
 and wise Man will be the same. Nay,  
 the

the whole Race and Order he calls an U-  
surpation on Mankind, and a Diabolical P. 166.  
and Antichristian Tyranny; and says, That Preface  
by the assistance of Mysteries we first erected P. 22.  
our selves into a distinct Order, and one  
separate Body; as if there were no such  
Order instituted and appointed by our  
Blessed Saviour. And to make us sure  
that this is his Opinion, He says plainly, Preface to  
He sees no reason why all Men indifferently, the Lady's  
shou'd not as lawfully teach, as they are Religion.  
bound to practice their Religion. And a-  
gain, why women might not enjoy the Pri-  
vilege of instructing others in the Religious  
Duties they are bound to practice themselves,  
He wants still to be inform'd. That they may  
teach their Children and Servants in pri-  
vate, all the World allows; So that his  
meaning is, that they may Preach in  
Publick as well as Men, though this be  
contrary to the exprefs words of Scrip-  
ture.

He insinuates every where that our  
Profession is but a Craft; and calls it a  
Trade; and our Religious Mysteries a  
Contrivance only to bring us Gain and Cre- Preface.  
dit; As if we had no sense at all of P. 19.  
Religion, and that a little vain Glory  
and Profit were all our aim.



He levels the whole Book mainly at the *Clergy*, and doth all he can to render us odious in the sight of the People. And to do it more effectually, he all along makes the *Clergy* and *Laiety* two opposite Parties, and endeavours to raise in them jealousies and suspicions of our gulling and abusing them, in order to prejudice and incense them against us. And that his Sophistry might pass upon them the better, he paints us out under the notion of *Heathen Priests*; he draws *their Picture*, and then leaves the *Laiety* to mistake it for *ours*; endeavouring every where, to make all People of his Faith, who thinks that *Priests of all Religions are the same*.

What this Man advances here, is but a Branch of that bitter Root of *Socinianism*, which hath opened a Door for introducing and reviving many of those *Heresies*, which have formerly infested the Church, and troubled the Faith of Christians. These Men differ among themselves, and there is as great a variety of them as there were of the *Arians* formerly; yet they all agree in Destroying Reveald Religion and established Doctrine of that Church, of which they yet profess themselves Members.

Thus

Thus these *Vermin* engendred in the Body of it, at the same time they strike at one another, do all equally contribute to devour the whole, from whence they first deriv'd their life and being.

I hope I need not here enter into a *Defence* of our *Order*, or make any long *Apology* for the *Ministers* of the Gospel. This one Book of his, is a sufficient *Proof* of the *Necessity* and *Usefulness* of the *Clergy*; for had it not been for us, such ridiculous *Sophisms* as these might have pass'd with the People for sound Reasoning. If it were not for them, whose business it is to confute the Arguments of these pretenders to *Reason*, to lay open their *Fallacies*, and detect their *Villainous Designs*; there wou'd not, in a little time, be so much as a *Face* of Religion among us. And if the *Experiment* were not too dangerous, and the consequences of it never to be retriev'd, there cou'd not be a greater demonstration of the *Necessity* and *Usefulness* of the *Clergy*, than the universal desisting of their endeavours only for a very short space, for then all Religion would degenerate into Barbarity and Heathenism.

If

If we are guilty of all these Villainies with which this Man brands us, there is no punishment either in this World, or the next too bad for us. But if we are not, and that this Man doth not make out what he so positively asserts, then what will he deserve? We appeal to any Power that is able to take account of the matter; And if the strength of all Laws Ecclesiastical and Civil should once be so relax't, that every one may openly vent what they please against the Christian Religion, and it's Teachers, without restraint (which God forbid) then we must leave it to him to defend his own Cause.

The World is at this time so dispos'd for the reception of all Discourses that seem to set up Reason and Evidence in opposition to the Reveald and Mysterious Doctrines of Christianity, that nothing less than the Interpositions of Authority, can stop this current of Infidelity and Profaneness which threatens to overwhelm these Nations.

How far Men in Power, according to their several Stations, are oblig'd to intermeddle in point of Conscience, I shall not now enquire. But sure I am, in point



point of Policy, it is become no less than necessary. For the writers of this Strain have given broad Hints, that they are as little Friends, to our Government, as our Religion. This Man can say, That Magistrates are made for the people; and every one knows, what Doctrine, of Rebellion Men are wont to insinuate by this saying. And again he says. That God alone, and such as are inspir'd <sup>Pref.</sup> by him, can prescribe Injunctions relating to the world to come, whilst Human Powers regulate the Affairs of this. By which 'tis plain his meaning is, that they have nothing to do, to meddle any way in the Affairs of Religion. Now what would this Man have said, if he durst have spoke as plainly of Government as he hath done of Religion.

Whosoever observes these Men's way of writing as to this one point, will be convinc'd they deserve to be look'd to; Their Numbers grow Formidable, They begin to speak out their Infidelity and Prophaneness, as plain as some of them do Treason; they are secretly forming themselves in Clubs and Caballs, and have their Emissaries into all parts; which are supported by Contributions: And I make little doubt, but that their design is at length to shew us, That all

Do-

*Dominion* as well as *Religion*, is founded in Reason.

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## POSTSCRIPT.

I Have designedly left the Consideration of those *Passages* he cites out of the *Fathers*, to the last, to be consider'd by themselves ; because many Persons who will read the *rational* part, don't care for troubling themselves with the Examination of these. And indeed, because I design'd to dwell much longer upon them, than I find the length of this *Letter* already will permit.

The very *Quoting* of the *Fathers*, is a confutation of himself ; for if there be no other ground of Perswasion but *Evidence*, what can the *Authority* of the *Fathers* signifie to encline Mens Assent either one way or the other ? and indeed, of Scripture it self ? All *Quotations* *Divine* or *Humane*, are useless and impertinent upon his Principles. For what he wou'd perswade by them is evident in it self or it is not. If it be evident, we shall certainly believe it, let who will say

say it; but if the truth of it be not evident from the nature of the thing it self, all the *Pompous Citations* in the World signifie nothing.

He was sensible of this; and that is the true reason why he gives the *Fathers* as foul language, as he doth the modern Clergy; not considering that the same Objection holds against the Bible it self. For if the Authority of God be not a ground of Perswasion, then a Text out of the Bible will be of as little force, as a Quotation out of any fabulous Heathen Author, to influence our Assent to any Proposition.

He introduces them after the most scornful manner he could contrive, and says, that the mentioning of *Schutcheons* puts him in mind of the Judgment of the *Primitive Church*. And in another place he hath this Expression, by way of ridicule, *The Fathers, The admir'd Fathers!* their *Opinions* he calls *Whym-sies*. And their Works *insuperable Labyrinths*. And calls the just Esteem we have for them, *A Blind Veneration* for those who liv'd before us. He never mentions them without the greatest contempt; and says, *He is not to be put out of countenance by Venerable Names. and Pompous Cita-*



*Citations, that have no value, but such as an ugly Rust and Colour give antient Coins.*

But this *similitude* that he designs by way of derision, doth very well express the worth and usefulness of the Fathers. For as ancient Coins are now of no greater intrinsick value than the bare weight of the Metal they are made of ; yet they are of excellent use to give us light into the times and customs of Antiquity, and upon that score are of vastly greater value than any modern Coins. So it is with the Fathers ; they were *Men*, and wrote like such ; and though we should grant that some of their works, are not in themselves more excellent than what hath been written in after-Ages , yet these Writings of theirs are much more to be valu'd, because they liv'd nearer the times of Christ and his Apostles, and therefore had greater advantages of coming to right apprehensions of all things relating to Christianity, than it is possible for any after them to have. Not but that some of them seem to have wrote by a more peculiar influence of the Spirit.

And therefore this Man's arrogant treatment of the Fathers, puts me in mind of that passage of the ignorant  
*Childrens*

Childrens reviling the Prophet, and calling him Baldpate; who saw nothing of him beyond those common infirmities that are incident to *Humane Nature*, and did not discern any thing of the *Divine Spirit* that was in him.

We do not blindly and implicitly acquiesce in any thing they say, but we have a just Veneration for them, and deference to their Authority; And if he could have produced any thing from them which had made against us, we would have own'd he had gain'd a great point. But all the Citations he produces, are only to prove that the things reveal'd under the Gospel, were call'd Mysteries under the Law; and That the Vail is taken away; both which allow. Let him bring one Text out of the *Bible*, or one Quotation out of the *Fathers*, to prove that the Vail is taken away in the sense that we deny, (*i. e.*) in respect of the true Nature, and real Properties of those things which we call Mysteries. For that it is taken away as to the *Existence* of those things and as to the *Relation* they have to us, as to the intent and design of them, we allow.

And this is a sufficient answer to all his Quotations, if he brought a thousand more to the same purpose he hath done these. However I shall consider them in particular. And,

\*Strom.  
Lib. 5.

I. He says, \* *Clemens Alexandrinus* hath the same notion of Mysteries with him. For he says the Christian Discipline was call'd φωτισμός or illumination, because it brought hidden things to light. Very true: But not because it brought them so to light, as to discover the real Nature and Properties of every thing reveal'd; and give us as clear and distinct notions of all divine things as they are in themselves, as we have even of sensible Objects, Which this Man ridiculously contends for. And this he would have seen if he had read but Ten Lines farther, where he has this Expression.

Ὁ γὰρ τῶν ὅλων Θεός, ὁ καὶ ἐν πάσῃ φωνῇ καὶ πᾶσι νόμοις καὶ πάσῃ ἐννοίᾳ, ἐκ αὐτοῦ ποτε γεγραπὸν ἐξεδεδείκνυται, ἀρρησίῳ ᾧ, &c.

By which he affirms the nature of God, to be above all we can conceive or speak of him. So that 'tis plain the Father in direct opposition to this Scribler, is of opinion that God is still *Mysterious*, notwithstanding all the Revelations we have of him.

The



The whole drift of the former part of that 5th Book, is to shew that the true nature of *FAITH*, consists in giving our assent to the truth of things which we cannot know, upon the Authority of God; and to this he applies that Text of the Apostle, 1. Cor. 2. 5. where he adviseth us *that our Faith should not be founded on the Wisdom of Men*, who, as he explains it, *pretend to make us know every thing we believe*. But on the *Veracity of God*, who saves us by *pure Faith*, without that *Evidence* of the thing it self, which some Men require. The Father's own words are these;

ἵνα ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν μὴ ᾖ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἀνθρώπων τὸν  
 ΠΕΙΘΕΙΝ ΕἰΛΑΓΓΕΛΛΟΜΕΝΩΝ, ἀλλ' ἐν δυνάμει  
 τοῦ, Τῆ ΜΟΝΗ ΚΑΙ ΑΝΕΥ ΤΩΝ ΑΠΟΔΕΙΞΕ-  
 ΩΝ, ΔΙΑ ΨΙΛΗΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ ΣΩΖΕΙΝ ΔΥ-  
 ΝΑΜΗΝ.

And therefore he elegantly calls Faith *the Ears of the Soul*, *πίστις ἢ ὦτα τοῦ ψυχῆς*, because by this we are dispos'd, to listen to Discourses of those things which we cannot comprehend. Not that he supposes we are ignorant of the meaning of any Proposition we believe, and therefore he says,

Ἡδὲ δὲ, ὅτι ἡ γνῶσις ἐνὶ πίστεως, καὶ ἡ πίστις ἐνὶ γνῶσις

*There is no Knowledge without Faith, nor Faith without knowledge.*

And he here makes a manifest difference, between that Assent which is the immediate effect of Knowledge, and that which is properly Faith. And then asketh this Question;

Τίς ἐν ἡμῖν ΑΘΕΟΣ ἀπιστεῖν διψῶ, καὶ τὰς ΑΠΟΔΕΙΞΕΙΣ ὡς ὅτι ἀνθρώπων ἀπιστεῖν ἔοικεν.

*Who is so estranged from God, so much an Infidel, as not to believe him upon his word; but require the same Evidence, and clear Knowledge of the things reveal'd from God, as he requires from Men? I answer, This Man of unparallel'd Impudence, who hath quoted this same 5th Book of his, against himself and us, to prove the quite contrary to what he thus positively asserts.*

The next Father he Quotes against us, is *Justin Martyr*. Who says, *Moses with his hands stretcht out at the Battel with the Amalakites, was a Type of Christ Crucified.* And He useth these words, *Type, Simbol, Mystery;*

*Mystery*, &c. to signify things once hid, but now reveal'd. So do we all to this day use these words, to express those things which were once hid, and now reveal'd; and yet there are *Mysteries* in the Christian Religion for all that. And if he will look into his Tract of a *True Confession of Faith*, He will never again cite this Father against us, at least in this Controversy; but call him all to nought as he hath done us. When he had been speaking of the Union of the Divine and Humane Nature in the Person of Christ, and proposed many intricate and insuperable difficulties concerning this Article of our Faith; Perhaps, says he, these unconceivable difficulties may perplex your mind, and stagger your Faith. As for me, when I am in any perplexity about these **CHRISTIAN MYSTERIES**, I cry out,

Ὅτι ὁ τῆς φύσεως ΛΟΓΟΣ, ὁπ' ἡμετέραν καὶ κατὰ τὴν φύσιν οὐκ ἔστιν ἡμετέρος.

That those things of our Religion are above our faculties of Knowledge, above **REASON**, above the capacities of created Nature.

And it follows, That there is no other Solution to be given of these things, but that of a **READY FAITH**. He argues moreover, the impossibility of coming to the



true knowledge of these Divine Objects, from the disproportion there is between them, and our present capacities. And asks this Question.

Πὼς ὁ ὅλος ἐδεῖαται τὸ πᾶν, τὰ δὲ πάντα ΔΙΕΤ-  
ΘΗΝΕΙΝ ὁτι χεῖρ ἐν ἑαυτῷ.

*With What Confidence can ye go about to give an exact Solution of Divine things? I leave this Man who is concern'd, to give him an answer.*

The next Quotation is out of Tertullian, who hath this expression in his Apology, *Cum vel ex Formâ omnibus Mysteriorum silentii fides habeatur, &c.* He is in that place defending the Christians, from those Crimes of Incest, Adultery, and murdering of Children, which the Heathen charged them, as being guilty of in their meetings. That they were groundless Rumours and nothing more, He argues thus; *These things must be first discovered either by our selves, or others; not by others, because they have no way to know them, but by such as are private to them; not by our selves, for none who are guilty of such horrid Crimes, would discover things which must expose them to the immediate punishment of the Laws, though the vengeance of God were deferred.*

*And*

And the force of the comparison with the Heathen *Mysteries* lies in this. If the Samothracian and Elusian *Mysteries* are kept so secret, which are not of such dangerous consequence to discover; How much more must you think such Horrid and dangerous *Mysteries* as you suppose ours to be, will be kept secret? And his Inference is very natural, viz. That these things must needs be meer Rumour, since if they were true, they would not be discover'd; or, if they were discover'd, must expect no mercy from the Heathen, who would be sure not to spare them. And therefore he says,

*Dicimur sceleratissimi, et dicimur tamen semper; nec vos quod tam diu Dicimur eruere curatis. Ergo aut eruite si creditis, aut nolite credere qui non eruistis.*

This is the whole scope of the place, and how this Man will wrest his inference out of it. Ergo, There are no *Mysteries* in Christianity, I can't imagine.

The last He cites, is Origen. Who says, That the Doctrines of our Religion do all agree with our COMMON NOTIONS, (i. e.) as far as we are able to know of them. But this doth not prove, That there is nothing more intended by them, than what we know as well, as we do the ordinary Objects of our Senses.

Again He says, *The Land of Promise was a Type of Heaven.* This Man's Inference is, Ergo, Now this is known, the state and condition of the blest in Heaven can be no Mystery to us.

That whole sixth Book of his against Celsus is to shew, the direct contrary to what this Man insists upon in his last Chap. viz. To prove against that Heretic, *That the Mysteries of the Christian Religion, were not Originally deriv'd from the Idolatrous and Superstitious Customs of the Heathen.* Let him answer that Book before he sets about answering Mine.

These are all his *Pompous Citations* from the Fathers, to prove what no one denies. *That the Vail is removed, and that therefore nothing in Christianity, nor the Nature of God, is Mystorious.*

Now after all, I find this is no new *Heresy*, but an old one of Eunomius revived, who affirmed, *The Real true Nature of God to be intelligible by us, which was long ago confuted in all the Branches of it by St. Basil.*

*Basil. con.  
Euno.*

It is to no purpose to heap up Quotations here, to prove that the opinion of the Fathers was, *That we know nothing of*  
the



the true Nature of God, there is not any thing which occurs more frequently in them, and that they are more express in; Greg. Nazianzen, calls God ΑΤΗΛΟΣ, and *Hymnus ad Deum.* in the same Hymn to God he hath this Verse;

*How can the Mind frame any Notion of thee, who art incomprehensible?*

Having thus shewn to how little purpose his Citations out of the Fathers are, and how the Nature of God is truly Myste-  
rious; because what I have spoke, concerning our manner of forming Idea's of God, and the things of another World, may look a little odd at first sight; as if I turned all Religion into Allegory, and by that means destroy the Reality and Substance of it. I shall shew that this is no new Doctrine of mine, but the Opinion of the Fathers.

Tertullian says, That God hath no other way of intercourse with Men, but by taking on him our Senses and Affections, by which he accommodates, the insupportable Majesty of his Nature, to our frail and imperfect state.

Contr.  
Marcio-  
nem Lib.  
2. cap. 27

Deus

Deus non potuit humanos congressus  
inire, nisi humanos & sensus & affectus  
suscepisset, per quos vim Majestatis suae  
intolerabilem, utique humanae mediocri-  
tati humilitate temperaret.

*Lib. 12.  
Contra  
Eunomi-  
um Haret.*

Gregory Nyssen, Discourfing at large,  
how the sacred Style was accommodated  
to our Capacity, by expreffing the Na-  
ture of God and divine things, under the  
notion of fuch things as are familiar to  
us; adds these words; *For how, fays he,*  
*could that Immensity be contain'd in a little;*  
*were it not that thofe things are brought down*  
*to our shallow Capacities?*

Πῶς ἂν ἐν τῷ μικρῷ χωρῇσθαι τὸ μέγα; ἀλλὰ τῇ  
ἐκχύπτῃ ὁ ἡμετέρας συνεισπύει δυνάμει.

*Epist. 9.  
ad Ti.*

Dionysius speaking of this Symbolical  
and Figurative way of conceiving, and  
expreffing the things of another World,  
calls thofe thofe things by which they are  
represented to us *ἱεροσυνδμήματα, figna, fig-*  
*menta,* which is better render'd by the  
English word *Substitutes*. And he adds,  
that the *τυπωτικὴ καὶ πολυμορφὰ* are the Sub-  
stitutes *τῶ ἀμορφωτῶν καὶ ἀτυπώτων*. Thofe  
things which have Form and Figure, are  
the Representatives of thofe Divine  
Things which have none. Again,

*Diony-*

Dionysius says, it is impossible for us to Cap. 1. de  
Cal. Hi.  
contemplate the nature of immaterial  
Objects, any other way than by help of  
those notions, we frame of those things  
which are material.

Μηδὲ δυνατόν ἐστι πρὸς ἡμᾶς νοεῖν, πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸν  
ἐκείνῳ ἀναταθῆναι τῶν ὑπερῶν ἱεραρχῶν θεωρίαν, εἰ  
μὴ τῇ κατ' αὐτὸν ὁμοίᾳ χειραγωγίᾳ χρῆσασθαι.

St. Cyrill says that our manner of con-  
ceiving Divine things, is by Examples or  
Similitudes ; after the same gross manner  
we represent the heavenly Orbs upon a  
piece of Paper.

Δ. ὁ δὲ τοῖς ἰδοῖσι ἐξισπνέει τὰ κατὰ  
ἐαυτοῦ μειζόνων ἐπὶ δειγμάτων ποτέμωροι, ὡς οἱ ἐν  
μικρῷ πίνακι τὸ ὑπερῶν κατὰ γράφον, τὰς κύκλους.

Gregory Nazianzen discourses fully, how Orat. 34.  
nothing is more evident than that there  
is a God, though at the same time we  
are not able to conceive or express what  
he is ; and hath these remarkable words  
concerning our manner of conceiving  
the things of another world.

Ὡς ἀδύνατον ἐκφράσαι τὸ ἐαυτοῦ σκῆμα, — ἢ τοῖς  
θεοῖσι πλησιάζειν τὸ ὄψιν δίχα τῶν ἐν μέσῳ φωτὸς καὶ ἀέ-  
ρος, ὡς αἰμύχανον τοῖς ἐν σώματι, δίχα τῶν σωμα-  
τικῶν πάντη θνῆσκειν καὶ τὸ νοεῖν.

By



By which he plainly supposes it as impossible for us, whilst we are immers'd in these gross Bodies, to frame any conceptions of Spiritual things, without the help of worldly Objects ; as it is for us to overtake our shadow, or to see in the dark.

It is ordinary with the *Fathers*, speaking of God to say, That when we conceive him as being a *Substance*, as being *Wise* and *Holy*, nay, as having *Life*, &c. they are all but *Figurative Representations* ; of something in God which transcends all that we can imagine.

*Dionysius*, or whoever was Author of  
*Chap. 13.* those Books which go under his Name,  
*de Div.* says,  
*No.*

Ἐν αὐτῷ μόνῳ καὶ τὸ ἀνέσταν, καὶ τὸ  
 ἄζων, καὶ τὸ ἄφρον, καὶ τὸ ἄνυον καὶ τὸ ἄλογον.  
 καὶ ὅσα ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ ἵστανται ὅτι ἡ ἀνέσταν καὶ τὸν ὑπερῶντος εἰδο-  
 ποιῆται.

And accordingly in his *Mystical Theology*, speaking of the nature of our present knowledge of God and Spiritual things, says very aptly that this is,

ἡ ἀβελυστία, καὶ ἀγνοῖα ἰαεῖν.

And

And therefore God in the writings of the Fathers is call'd ἀνόρουτος, ἀείωνος, ἄψυχος. without Existence, without Substance, without a mind, without Life. Not by way of Privation, as Marius Victorinus in his 4th Book against Arius, observes, but by way of Excellence. Because the notions affixt to these words, express nothing of the true nature of the things when referr'd to God. Very agreeable to what the Apostle says, Acts 17, 27. Where he expresseth the Knowledge we have of God, by feeling after him. The Original word Ἰσαριθόειν is very expressive, for it signifies the groping for a thing in the dark.

Clemens Alexandrinus speaking of the Strom. method we have of coming to know the Lib. 5. nature of God, says, That the utmost we can arrive to, is to know what he is not, and not what he is.

And thus we see how little reason this Man had to quote those Fathers who he tells us, have the good luck to be both the New, and the Old of the World. But His Heresy is as old as Enochius, and now reviv'd by this UPSTART, as he very aptly calls himself. And I think we may well call this

this *New Old Sect* of his, the *Gnosticks* of our Age, since they are a profound sort of people, who set up for *Knowing* every thing, and *Believing* nothing.

He hopes in time to plead *Prescription*, and that *His Book* too shall in after-ages be valued, as the *Fathers* are in this. But alas! though he wants no qualification of *Error*, and *Impiety* for this *Ambition* of his; yet he hath not *Wit* and *Learning* enough to be a *Heretick* upon *Record*. Such Books as these seldom live any longer, than till their *Fallacies* are laid open; and then they perish, and rot with the *Memory* of their *Authors*. Whereas the *Fathers* (who are now in *Heaven* for defending that *Truth*, which he hath labour'd to corrupt) will have their just *Authority*, among all *Pious* and *Learned Men* to the end of the *World*.

And now that I have done, I must confess the *Man* was not worth my trouble; but the *Cause* is richly so, and it is our misfortune that we think nothing can gain upon the *World* but *sound Reasoning* and *Argument*. Whereas there have been many instances, of the most odd and ridiculous *Enthusiasts* having in a short time *Profelytes* enough, to bring *Church* and *State* into confusion. He hath as  
little



little of true *Reasoning* or *Argument* as any of them, but his *Pretence* is plausible; and those are the Books which do mischief in the World. And therefore I was not to consider the *strength* only of the *Passion*, but the constitution of the Age, which seems strangely disposed for *Infidelity*, and a *Contempt* of all Divine Revelation.

Besides, I have contriv'd this Letter, so as to be an answer not only to him, but to all the *Opposers* of *Revelations* and *Mysteries*. And I hope I may say, I have done something towards the right stating this whole *Controversy*, which hath been hitherto so much mistaken on both Sides. For whilst Men on one hand, expect a rational account, and clear and distinct *Idea's* of what is wholly *Unaccountable* by us, and of which we can have no *Conceptions* at all. And on the other hand, Men go about with endless labour, to explain what is *Inexplicable*; there can be no end of these *Controversies* which multiply upon us every day. But if we all agree to leave off speaking of what we know nothing of, and freely own what we must confess whether we will or no; *That we can have no Idea's at all, of the things of another World as they are in themselves; and that our manner of conceiving them at present, is by Intervention of the common Objects of*  
this

*this Life, then the whole controversy will be reduced to a very short Issue. And all the Revelations and Mysteries of Christianity, establish'd upon those foundations which Christ hath laid; Not in the Wisdom of Men, but in the Power of God.*

*Trin. Col. Dub.*

*May 1. 1697.*



**FINIS.**